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KEY
TO
MATRICULATION
MODERN FRENCH READER

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A KEY
TO
MATRICULATION
MODERN FRENCH READER

BY
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KEY TO MATRICULATION MODERN FRENCH READER.

1. The Rebellion.

One evening in the month of November, Henriette de Thavenet was sitting before the drawing-room fireplace, in which a great log fire was burning. Monsieur de Thavenet had gone up to bed. The girl was reading, but her eyes were sometimes fixed absently on the flames. In them she was gazing at scenes painted by her imagination. The boundless silence of the sleeping house lapped her in on all sides. At times the rain beat on the window-panes.

An indistinct noise coming from the high-road suddenly made her start. With her eyes she consulted a clock on the mantelpiece.

"Ten o'clock," said she to herself, "Jérôme won't come this evening. He must have stayed in Montreal; Lilian or Armontgorry will have kept him."

14. At this moment, hasty steps in the garden made her get up. She went to the window, which she meant to open, when she drew back a step or two, stifling a cry of surprise. A face flattened itself right against the pane and two eyes were gazing at her. But she recognised her brother beckoning to her to go and open the door to him. Surprised and rather bewildered by Jérôme's extraordinary attitude,

Henriette ran into the hall and opened the door. Jérôme and an unknown slipped into the house.

"Henriette," said Jérôme quietly, "is everyone asleep here?"

"Yes," said the girl, "but why the question? What is happening?"

"Hush, let's go into the drawing-room, and bring us something to eat, cold meat, biscuits, wine. We are dying of hunger and fatigue. I'll explain."

30. When Henriette came back into the parlour bringing on a tray the cold supper her brother had asked for, she found him putting fresh logs on the fire. His companion was lying rather than sitting in an armchair. The two men's muddy boots and their dirty clothes bore witness to a journey in the rain. While noticing these details, the girl had drawn a little round table up to the fire. Then the man who had come in with Jérôme, and who so far had not uttered a word, raised his head, which he had been holding in both hands. Henriette recognised Armontgorry.

The young man's matted hair, his pale face, his disordered clothes, surprised Henriette. Armontgorry, always so correct and so cool, seemed as if he had just come out of a street row. Besides, he looked worn out. Struck by his appearance, Henriette dared not ask any questions. The two men had sat down at the table and were eating ravenously.

"Listen, Henriette," said Jérôme, "that thing is now happening which we have long expected, and which yet is a surprise all the same."

The girl felt herself trembling. She looked at her brother and Armontgorry. She perceived that this latter was hiding his uniform under a rough settler's overcoat.

51. "And you know," Jérôme went on, "it won't come off as it does in Monsieur Papineau's speeches. He has set

the ball rolling, and now we shall have to try to keep it going."

"But what do you mean, Jérôme? I don't understand. What is going on? What has happened to you?"

"Armongorry," said Jérôme, "you're done up. Go and lie down on the sofa and have a sleep. I'll put Henriette up to it all while you have a bit of a rest."

Without saying a word, Armongorry had got up and made for the sofa, on which he fell like a log.

"Henriette," said Jérôme, leaning towards the fire and poking up its flames, "The rebellion has begun."

—*The Redcoats.*

2. *The Escape.*

"I would rather take him with us," declared Louis XVII. Baker refused; "Impossible, alas, he must stay behind."

"They won't hurt him?" "Not at all." "Truly?" "I give you my word of honour for it."

The child king gave a sigh of sadness. His gentle nature hated to leave this poor little lad in prison, while he himself was going to be free and no doubt happy.

"Then I *am* going to be saved?" he said.

13. "Yes, sire, but come quickly; time is pressing, and any delay might cost you your freedom and me my life."

Louis XVII. gave himself completely up to the hands of the American, who began to dress him. When his toilet was finished, Baker took him to the washerwoman's basket, and taking out a tray filled with dirty linen, he took hold of the child and made him sit in the bottom, saying to him:

"Above all, sire, whatever may happen, don't stir and

don't cry out. Your safety depends on your stillness and your silence."

"I understand," replied Louis XVII. Then he added with a charming smile: "Kiss me, kind friend."

26. Baker, deeply moved, leaned towards him and respectfully kissed his brow. The little prince obediently stretched out and disappeared under the tray full of linen which Baker had put back in position. Raising the basket on his shoulder, the American left the room, after casting a final glance at the poor little substitute who continued in his heavy slumber, unconscious of the part he was going to play in this terrible drama. Baker went through the ante-room and opened the door which led on to the staircase . . . and found himself face to face with a soldier who was on guard.

"Keep a good look-out on young Capet," he advised.

38. The soldier nodded assent; and Baker, after going downstairs, made his way towards the main courtyard and reached the guardroom. Noticing a man on duty, he said to him in the most natural tone in the world:

"Someone will come quite soon to fetch the clothes. But I've been summoned to General Barras and can't wait for him. You give him this basket."

Putting down his burden on the ground, he passed through the entrance gate and made off in the direction of the street where Fersen, Turgy and Mrs. Atkins, disguised as poor people, were waiting for him in feverish impatience. As soon as he appeared, all three dashed towards him.

51. "It's done," he declared. "Mallory won't arrive before ten. The basket is in the guardroom. There's nothing to do but to take it."

"Wait for me here, I'm going," declared Mrs. Atkins; and, escorted by Turgy, she at once went towards the Temple, which she soon entered with deliberate steps.

Mastering the emotion which was stifling her, she declared to the sentry who barred her way :

“ I’ve come to get little Capet’s washing.”

“ There it is, citizeness, take it ! ” said the soldier, pointing out the basket which was in the doorway of the guardroom.

63. “ Put that on your shoulders,” Mrs. Atkins ordered Turgy. The latter was going to do so ; but the sentry approached, full of suspicion, and drawing his hanger he seemed going to plunge the point into the middle of the basket. Instinctively, the young Englishwoman grasped the sentry’s arm.

But Turgy, in a vulgar accent, exclaimed, “ No, hold on, mate ; you’re not going to spoil the nation’s washing ! ”

“ ’Twas only my fun,” declared the soldier, thrusting back his weapon into the scabbard. Mrs. Atkins stifled a sigh of relief. But Turgy had already loaded his basket on his shoulder, and was making for the entrance.

Mrs. Atkins followed him. Louis XVII. was saved !

—*The Child-King.*

3. The Nightingale.

In the old days the nightingale did not sing at night. He had a dainty threadlet of a voice and used it with skill from morning to night once the spring had come. He got up with his friends in the gray-blue dawn, and their fluttered awakening used to shake off the gnats who were sleeping on the under side of the lilac leaves.

He would go to bed on the stroke of seven or half-past, anywhere, often in the flowering vines with their scent of

mignonette, and there he slept without a break until the morrow.

10. One spring night, the nightingale was sleeping upright on a young vine-shoot, his necktie fluffed out and his head on one side, as though he had a graceful crick in his neck. While he slept, the tendrils of the vine, those brittle and tenacious tendrils, with their fresh sorrel-like tartness which irritates and quenches one's thirst, the tendrils of the vine grew so thick that night that the nightingale woke up bound, his claws tied up in forked bonds, his wings powerless.

He nearly died, he struggled, he got loose only at the price of a thousand efforts, and all that spring he swore he would never sleep again, so long as the tendrils of the vine were growing. The very next night, to keep himself awake, he sang :—

So long as the vine shoots, shoots, shoots,
I'll never sleep, sleep, sleep !
So long as the vine shoots, shoots, shoots . . .

25. He varied his theme, adorned it with scraps of vocalese, fell in love with his own voice, and became that frantic, intoxicated and panting singer to whom one listens with an unbearable des're to see him sing.

I once did see a nightingale singing beneath the moon, a wild nightingale who did not know he was being watched. Sometimes he interrupts himself, with bent neck, as though to listen within himself for the prolongation of a note that is silenced. Then he begins again with all his might, swelling out his body, his throat thrown backwards, with an air of passion and despair. He sings for singing's sake, he sings such lovely things that he no longer knows what they mean. But I, I still hear through those golden notes, those solemn sounds of the flute, the trembling and crystal-

line trills, the pure and powerful cries, I still hear the first ingenuous and frightened song of the nightingale caught in the tendrils of the vine :

So long as the vine shoots, shoots, shoots . . .

—*The Tendrils of the Vine.*

4. *Lost.*

All the same, he was obliged to cross three fields and jump a deceptive little brook, into which he nearly plunged with both feet. At last, after a final jump from the top of a slope, he found himself in the yard of a countryman's house. A pig grunted. At the sound of footsteps on the frozen earth, a dog began to bark furiously.

The shutter of the door was open, and the glimmer that Meaulnes had seen was that of a fire of faggots burning on the hearth. There was no other light than that of the fire. A goodwife in the house got up and came to the door, without appearing otherwise disturbed. The grandfather's clock at that moment struck half-past seven.

"Excuse me, lady," said the big boy, "I really think I've put my foot in your chrysanthemums."

15. Stopping with a bowl in her hand, she looked at him.

"That's a fact," she said, "it's so dark in the yard you can't see the way."

There was a silence, during which Meaulnes stood and gazed at the walls of the room papered like an inn with illustrated papers, and the table, on which a man's hat was lying.

"Isn't the master in?" he said, sitting down.

"He'll be back," said the woman, reassured. "He's gone to get a faggot."

"Not that I really want him," continued the young man,

bringing up his chair to the fire. "But we're a few guns there on the watch. I've come to ask you to let us have a little bread."

29. He knew, did big Meaulnes, that with country people, and especially on a lonely farm, one must speak very cautiously, diplomatically, even, and never show that one does not belong to the district.

"Bread?" said she. "We shall hardly be able to give you any. The baker hasn't come to-day, though he does pass every Tuesday."

Augustin, who for a moment had hoped to find himself near a village, got frightened.

"The baker from where?" he asked.

"Why, the Vieux-Nançay baker," replied the woman in astonishment.

"How far is it from here exactly, Vieux-Nançay?" continued Meaulnes in great anxiety.

"I couldn't tell you exactly by the road; but by the short cut it's ten miles."

45. And she began to tell how she had her daughter in a place there, who used to walk over to see her every first Sunday of the month, and how her masters . . .

But Meaulnes, utterly baffled, interrupted her to say:

"Would Vieux-Nançay be the nearest place to here?"

"No, that's Les Landes, three miles off. But there aren't any shopkeepers or baker there. There's just a little fair every year, on St. Martin's Day."

Meaulnes had never heard tell of Les Landes. He saw he was so far out of his reckoning that he was almost amused. But the woman, who was busy washing her bowl at the sink, turned round, curious in her turn, and slowly said, looking very straight at him:

"Don't you belong to this part of the country, then?"

—*Big Meaulnes.*

5. *The Teaparty.*

Madame Lestelle was finishing her phrase with the mournful intonation of a little girl lost in the woods, when Basilisse entered, her two hands clutching the lace border of a teacloth which fell round a lacquer tray.

The irritating clatter of the cups stopped all voices. Madame Lestelle pushed up a table and was here, there, and everywhere round it, putting out her slender hands, throwing back with a rapid movement every time she did so the lace on her sleeves, shaking all the frills and furbelows of her light-coloured dress, and pressing her guests with the graces of a lady in a minuet.

"Another cup, Monsieur de Sénabugue?"

"No, thank you."

"You find the tea rather weak. My poor Basilisse, who only knows aperient teas, is always afraid to put too much in. I think she is giving us water bewitched."

16. "We can't always be at the marriage feast of Cana, can we, Vicar?" said the marquis.

But in face of Madame Lestelle's hurt expression, Monsieur de Sénabugue added with a smile on his acidulated lips:

"In this India Company china I could drink hemlock and think it delicious."

Madame Lestelle's face, shadowed for a moment with vexation, emerged from the cloud, all smiling in its artificial youthfulness and once again sunny with good humour.

"My dear marquis, they shall serve you a little collation . . . Basilisse . . . Oh yes, just a slice of meat-pie with a thimbleful of burgundy. No? Some clear soup, then? Not even that?"

28. "Not even that. Would you kindly have my

carriage sent for?" added the marquis, half-turning towards Basilisse, who was poking her clay-coloured face from behind the velvet curtain.

"You've absolutely made up your mind to leave me with the recollection of Basilisse's barbaric tea."

"With the recollection of your kind welcome, dear lady," replied Monsieur de Sénabugue, uttering, once again without sincerity, the polite phrases of leave-taking and going towards his carriage after having taken leave of the Vicar.

Madame Lestelle went with him, almost running at his side, her voice jerky through slight breathlessness. In the blazing daylight outside, her dress looked a little shabby, the golden brooch shone out imitation and grotesque on her shoulder, and her real complexion could be guessed under the slightly cracking rouge. When the marquis turned round with a sudden swing, Madame Lestelle fell back into the shadow of the house, feeling that he was examining her with merciless clearness of vision.

45. The carriage furrowed with its wheels the gravel of the terrace and went off, its reflexions dying out in the avenue that was already deep in shade, and in which there soon appeared only the outline of the two servants, stiff and upright on their seat.

Madame Lestelle went back into the drawing-room and found the priest standing up.

"Are you leaving me too? Do stay. D'you know, Monsieur de Sénabugue doesn't get a bit older."

"Nonsense! Every morning he begins the day again one day older, just as we do; come now, madame. But after all there is life and plenty of freshness still in his mottled red face, I don't deny it."

"*And* blue blood," fervently added Madame Lestelle. "He was delightful, and not very rude."

"Indeed, the dear man!"

59. " Ah, don't you know, that sort of people know so well how to get themselves forgiven, and then they do interest me so much . . . Just imagine, we know practically nothing of our relations farther back than a grandfather ; we can no longer make out the road the torch has followed as it passed from hand to hand to bear its spark as far down as ourselves, whereas they, they can recognise themselves through the centuries. Doesn't it make you giddy to think of such a family tree ? "

" It doesn't, but it shall, if that pleases you."

The Vicar had settled himself in the easy chair left vacant by Monsieur de Sénabugue. Now, in the intimacy of their chat, his robust shoulders were hunched up ; he let himself go in a sort of repose. Madame Lestelle reflected that even so do peasants rest, somewhat squat, relaxing all their muscles. She saw once more in the same place the marquis, by whose image she was still haunted. Just recently he had been moving so gracefully in the faded old easy-chair ; sometimes he rested his two outstretched arms on it, heedless and unconstrained he moulded it to his movements, animated it by his presence, and yet seemed to weigh so lightly on it.

" Blue blood, blue blood," silently repeated Madame Lestelle to herself with enthusiasm.

—*Let's dance the Round.*

6. *My Play.*

You won't expect me to tell you in detail the incidents of the rehearsals. These rehearsals were horrid. I had drawn on my head the hatred of a comedian, Léoval, who wasn't in the least satisfied with his part. Monsieur Léoval did his modest best to humiliate me. For example, he joy-

fully called me a "neophyte." Proud of this substantive, he murmured it, then trumpeted it, and hurled it as a reply to my timid observations: "Neophyte! Ah, neophyte!"

9. One day I retorted. "No slang between us, Monsieur Léoval."

And off he anxiously went to consult the dictionary.

As far as that great actress, Marie-Louise Pastel, is concerned, my relations as between author and artiste with that unbearable individual may be summed up by the first line of the notes she sent me.

1° Dear sir and author,

2° My dear author,

3° Dear friend,

4° My dear,

5° My dear author,

6° Dear sir,

7° Sir.

23. "Sir" was on the eve of the final rehearsal. Mademoiselle Pastel proposed to modify my text.

"At bottom," she explained, "that beast of a Léoval isn't altogether wrong: you *are* a beginner. Now do just listen to your interpreters, who know the ropes. Listen to me. Just make some cuts in the men's parts . . . etc."

Finally on the day of what they call the dressmakers' rehearsal, I was worn out, haggard, dazed, furious, and irritated with everyone except the manager. He insisted on being kind to me, but rather after the style of a shipwrecked mariner forced to share a raft, who is kind to his companion in misfortune before the catastrophe he foresees. What a life! To have remained idle for twenty-seven years only to undergo such agonies!

36. Dressmakers' rehearsal: thirty persons stuck stiff and straight in the big hall. And frozen dressmakers too.

Ah, my boy, how hard it is to touch dressmakers' feelings ! Impossible to make out on their confounded faces anything more than ladylike boredom ! And the milliners—well ! An apprentice, who had come with her mistress, exploded at the most pathetic moment.

“ Get out ! ” yelled Pastel.

I seconded : “ Get out, mademoiselle ! ”

The young person, who was quite fifteen, made excuses :

“ It's the young lady from Caroline's talking nonsense to me.”

I demanded the expulsion of the young lady from Caroline's. And calm was restored, but I had all that little public against me. That in any case is the author's lot, and in the end he regards himself as the blackest of criminals. I reaped my harvest of scanty applause. And off went the milliners and the dressmakers in silence.

55. “ We're making straight for a fiasco,” suavely remarked Mademoiselle Pastel. “ I've been carefully noticing my god-daughter, whom I brought because she's so sensitive. She was yawning ! My god-daughter was yawning ! ”

“ Don't let us exaggerate anything,” said Léoval conciliatorily. And he concluded, as though he were talking of bad money, “ It's a piece that may pass at a pinch. So there ! ”

I heard no more. As many minutes as it takes to pack a trunk, and I fled !

“ Gare d'Orsay ! ”

64. Next day I receive un-hoped-for telegrams : a successful dress rehearsál, the prospect of marvellous press notices. In short, Glory, at three-halfpence a word. One day more do I wait, the better to relish my glory. Then,

unable to wait any longer, I take the train, and at the theatre I come upon faces half a yard long. A good dress rehearsal, a ghastly first night ! The public isn't taking on ! Bookings minute. My manager, a poet but a few days ago, has given up poetry for accounts, and throws me a "Hullo, you !" as sharp as a knock with a cudgel. Pastel gives me two icy finger-tips. Léoval does not conceal the pure joy of an "I-told-you-so." The scene-shifters shake their heads as I pass. As for the articles : half and half, mead and vinegar. Mead in the smaller papers, vinegar in the others. I go to the second night, I listen to an Act. I find it idiotic—the influence of the press, no doubt—and I return home, where bills await me.

—*The Novel of the Four.*

7. *The Miser.*

Love of money tortured the heart of Madame Henri Lanterle. She loved it not for the vain pleasures it may procure, but disinterestedly, for itself alone. The idea that one was obliged to spend part of one's income reduced her to desolation. She counted out the number of matches that were expected to last a week, weighed out herself the sugar, salt, and spices needed for the housekeeping, knew on what days and at what stalls extraordinary bargains could be picked up, bought at Maigny in the autumn, as job lots, the materials in which her daughters would be dressed the following summer, and at Valleyres, on Mondays, the pieces that the butchers had been unable to sell on the Saturday and were giving away half-price for fear they would not keep ; but Madame Lanterle declared that meat "liked to wait a little." Fortified for the rest by the

authority of a magazine article, she condemned that excess of flesh food to which we are prone, and imposed on her husband and children an austere diet of vegetables, which by their unaided efforts furnished the table three times a week. On this treatment, her daughters had acquired the fair complexion of nuns.

19. On Sundays, at Mass, they received turn and turn about a halfpenny from their mother to put into the alms box. In all things, Madame Henri Lanterle displayed great activity. She it was who made the list of books to be bought for the Parish Library. She ordered the *Revue des Deux Mondes*; but the tone of the novels and some of Renan's articles scandalised her. Someone suggested the *Correspondant*, and it came, to fulfil the ideal of a magazine formed by Madame Lanterle.

—*A Little Town.*

8. *The Journey.*

The journey had been simple as far as Paris. There, on the station platform, in the bright spring morning, they found themselves once again two bewildered country cousins. Philippe, who had served his seven years as a soldier at Paris, under the second Empire, had indeed explained to them that they were to go to the "Strasbourg Station," where they would take the train for Nancy. For more than half an hour, running from an imperturbable policeman to a dumbfounded passer-by, they begged somebody, anybody, to be good enough to tell them the way to the "Strasbourg Station." Nobody knew this station.

10. Meantime, across the years, they recognised the Seine, the Louvre, and in the distance the towers of Notre-Dame and the spire of the Sainte-Chapelle.

"Gracious! where are the ruins of the Tuileries?" exclaimed Madame de Charrières to herself with no real interest, worn out with carrying her bag, to give a moment's repose to her anxiety; but suddenly: "Where is she? Oh, Heavens!" she groaned, turning on her heel like a little girl whose mother has deserted her in a threatening crowd. Twenty steps further on, Mademoiselle Maucombes was bargaining with a cabman on the prowl. She signed to her sister to join her.

19. It was one of those shamefaced carriages that only come out at night and seem to be melted away by the first ray of dawn. Yet no other could have accorded better with the appearance of these two travellers, aged by weariness and sorrow, whose indescribably constructed hats, whose tippets which the May sunlight showed up a little rusty under their black dye, had just brought a smile to the lips of an acid errand girl with a flower in her bodice.

29. The cabman kept turning round on his seat from time to time, and in a fatherly way pointed out with the end of his whip the marvels of the metropolis: the Carrousel, the Rue de Rivoli, the Avenue de l'Opéra. "That reminds me," said Madame de Charrières, "that we haven't had breakfast . . . Oh, not that I'm hungry, of course . . . My poor Jean, my poor little Jean!" And she began to cry, lying back among the cushions, unashamed, with unhidden tears, instinctively, just as if they were in the High Street at Nérac. Mademoiselle Maucombes looked round her. No one saw them, no one was looking at them. How small a thing is a genuine sorrow! Or rather, how great it is, since, rising thus beyond a whole crowd, it asserts that its one domain is infinite solitude.

"Control yourself," said Mademoiselle Maucombes to her sister, powerless to find other words.

44. At last, the cab stopped before the steps of the Eastern Station, amid such grinding of its springs that it seemed to be irremediably broken, having henceforth accomplished its duty on earth.

—*The Last Resting-Place.*

9. *The Money Lender.*

As they went down the Rue de Rome towards Madame Verrière's abode, Monsieur Cabillaud kept imparting to Jacques useful information on the world into which he was going to introduce him ; and Jacques kept listening, full of respect and gratitude.

"Money, my dear fellow (I can quite well already call you 'my dear fellow' instead of 'my lad,' for your existence and your early meditations have ripened you very quickly), money, my dear fellow, is a thing that is worth so much that it is really absurd and even indecent to discuss the price it costs . . . It costs a great deal ! . . . even when one is reduced to working to get it. But even if it were to cost twice as much, it still remains of inestimable worth . . . Madame Verrière knows this well, a woman who has never made an enemy of one of those from whom she exacts a supplementary commission . . . Give me your hand, this is a dangerous curb . . ."

16. "Ah, she charges a commission over and above the interest, does she ?"

"Why ! how do you suppose she lives ? And besides, we haven't the choice. You are a minor ; the money-lender would know to-morrow whether your father will or will

not pay your debts, and as he wouldn't . . . You have no guarantee to give, whereas Madame Verrière . . ."

"Well? But I've no guarantee for Madame Verrière, either."

"Legally speaking, no; but if Madame Verrière were making an advance to a rag-and-bone man, she would get him to mortgage his basket. She's the wildest woman I know . . ."

29. Madame Verrière lived in a plain and sober room, adorned with decent furniture, but a room in which one guessed that, unceasingly preoccupied by other cares, she had never bothered to tidy up the knick-knacks, the picture-frames and the dust. When her visitors entered, she was sitting before a desk loaded with papers, and was wearing a pair of spectacles which she took off as she got up.

"Dear Madame Verrière," said Monsieur Cabillaud, with his most majestic man-of-the-world air, "may I introduce my friend Monsieur Jacques de Meillan, who has only seen you once by chance at his father's house, but who is burning to make your further acquaintance."

41. Madame Verrière held out to the young man a plump and ringless hand, at the end of a short, fat arm.

"Very kind of you to have thought of me," she replied in a voice amazing in its thinness, and seeming to issue from the block of her face like a thread of water from a cliff; "that is just like you, dear Monsieur Cabillaud. And Monsieur Jacques will always be very welcome at Madame Verrière's . . . His father has already been to see me this morning."

"Ah!" exclaimed simultaneously the son and the friend.

"Yes, but that couldn't possibly influence in any way my feelings towards Monsieur Jacques. Monsieur Jacques is a distinguished young man, and so delightful! I love to oblige young people."

54. " You always have loved to, dear Madame Verrière," thereupon recollected Monsieur Cabillaud. " When I was twenty (you were thirty in those days), you did me unforgettable services . . . You wouldn't continue them later on, to be sure ; but don't let us recriminate. On my word of honour, I was in love with you, Madame Verrière, besides . . . Nobody can imagine nowadays what Madame Verrière was like at that time."

" Will you just be quiet, you naughty man," whispered Madame Verrière.

" We're both older now, and all that nonsense no longer becomes our age . . . But it does become the age of those who come after us, and here is a young man whom his father keeps short of money, and who would ask for nothing better, for the sake of this same nonsense, than to . . . But I leave him to explain himself what he wants."

70. " I am quite at your service."

" I should like," said Jacques, " to borrow a hundred francs as soon as possible. The matter is urgent, at a day's notice."

" Do you want to borrow a hundred francs," distinguished Madame Verrière, " or do you want a hundred francs ? "

" Eh ? "

" Our friend doesn't follow," interrupted Monsieur Cabillaud. " He isn't used to it ; I'll explain to him. Madame Verrière is asking you if you want to borrow a hundred francs and receive a little less, or draw a hundred francs and owe a little more. Dear Madame Verrière, I can answer you at once : he wants to receive a hundred francs."

82. " Good," said Madame Verrière, " and you want them at once ? "

" Ah, this evening, if that were possible."

Madame Verrière shook her head with a movement which undoubtedly meant : " It's amazing, the queer ideas people have about money. Poor child ! How quickly the future will strip him of them ! "

" That's exactly the point that offers the greatest difficulty. A hundred francs ! If I had them, just for the pleasure of obliging you I would advance them myself, without interest too. It disgusts me, interest does. I must be downright forced by my lenders to ask for it, to dare to do so with those who address themselves to me in their need of money. After all, a lot of good it does me to complain ; it won't make me any richer, and I shall still be dependent on others."

—*Writ in Water.*

10. The Neurambourg Revolution.

First of all there was something like a terrible clap of thunder, then a crash of breaking windows, then shouts. Finally, the door of my room opened.

" Will Your Highness get up quickly, and come into the guard-room ? "

I recognised the voice of the Count de Wesserlex, my father's orderly officer. I turned the light on. I saw the pallid countenance of a terrified young man.

" What's wrong ? "

" I can't exactly tell you . . . But the mob are invading the Palace. There is not a second to lose."

" And my father ? "

" His Majesty is just back from the theatre . . ."

" I know. But where is he ? "

" I don't know."

" And my mother ? "

" She has been told. I beg Your Highness to hurry . . ."

19. At this moment, wild ringings of electric bells re-echoed in all the corridors. I leapt out of bed. Wesserlex had disappeared.

I rushed towards a window and pushed back the shutters. A red glare enveloped me. At my feet was a fantastic scene. A crowd was eddying round the cavalry and infantry of our army, who were trying to defend the approaches to the Royal Palace. The arc lights were out. There was nothing but the headlights of motors, paper torches, purple Bengal lights to illuminate this scene . . . One heard a dull murmur, shocks, the clash of arms, sometimes a cry. But the battle was taking place in a semi-silence. They were too busy striking one another, they shouted not at all.

33. "Is Your Highness ready?"

Wesserlex was there again behind me.

"No, but—" "It will be too late."

In a few seconds I was dressed. Gusts of shouting burst into the room and filled the corridors. A religious chant, slow and sad, rose above them all.

"You hear?" I said to the officer.

"Yes, it is the *International*. Come away . . . come away quickly!"

He preceded me. The long corridor to my rooms was empty, but I heard confused rushing to and fro above my head, rapid dashes up and down stairs. I imagined I saw servants and pages in the distance. All I thought of was to find my mother.

48. Suddenly, the electric light went out. I no longer knew where Wesserlex was; and as I heard the firing close at hand, I was afraid there was fighting below me, in the main court-yard. I retraced my steps. I ran into two chambermaids who were shrieking with fear; "Run for your lives! They are in the Saloon of the Princes!"

That was in fact the first room one could get into after passing the gates. I went towards the private apartments which opened on to the park . . . Two corridors, a staircase, a big dark room : the Privy Councillor's study, another corridor. They must have been slaughtering one another in the Throne Room, for I heard frightful thuds and cries. . . .

61. Luckily, a servant carrying a torch stopped short in the doorway. I rushed towards him. He recognised me.

"If Your Highness would be pleased to follow me," said he calmly to me. His placid professional politeness soothed me. He showed me the way and took me into the guard-room. It was filled with people. This was the place of meeting. Candles lit up the silent assembly. Some officers saluted me and made a way for me. I saw my mother.

71. She was sitting in, or rather had collapsed into, an armchair. She raised her eyes towards me and took my hand. I felt her tears on my fingers. My younger brother Jacques, who was standing beside her, kissed me.

"Your father," murmured mother, unable to complete her sentence.

But with a gesture she had pointed out to me a sofa on her right. I saw on it a form covered with a black cloak. There was blood dripping on to the carpet. I understood. I flung myself upon the body to tear away the shroud, and gaze for a last time on the face of the king. A hand held me back. I turned.

"Leave me alone, I beg of you."

84. The Privy Councillor, Mirkeline, had placed himself in front of the body.

"If Your Highness will forgive me . . . But we have no time to weep here ; we have to flee. Someone will see to giving fitting burial to the remains of His Majesty."

I was indignant and firmly answered : " If there still remain any men of spirit, they will form up around me, and die if need be, so that my mother and this corpse are not . . ." Mirkeline interrupted me in a peremptory tone. "If within one minute we are not in the garden, Her Majesty and all that are hers will be the prisoners of the mob . . . Everything is ready for the departure."

97. At the same moment an aide-de-camp arrived out of breath.

" They are masters of the Throne Room. There are twenty men to defend the private apartments. Run ! "

I hesitated. The Privy Councillor had more decision. He approached my mother, and aided by the Grand Chamberlain, Grosswell, he raised her and conducted her towards the park gate. My brother and some officers followed, some out of a sense of duty, the greater part with a secret joy at escaping from danger. I alone remained behind, with the torch-bearers who stood still on the threshold. For a moment longer I gazed at my father's corpse which we were leaving behind us, and which in the semi-darkness showed up as a black shadow to which clung wavering gleams of light. . . .

III. " Put out your lights," said a voice to the servants.

I went down the steps into the thick night. A puff of fresh air beat against my face. The rifle-shots were cracking out sharply in the distance. The tumult of the victorious rising, its songs and its noises, reached us deadened by the tall screen of the trees. Shadows were whirling, fading away, rushing towards the servants' buildings on our left. We walked on tiptoe to prevent the gravel from crunching. Soon nothing was to be heard but the sobs of my mother, whispered orders, and the wind. . . .

—*The Blood of Kings.*

11. Madame Bermance's Son.

Anastasie, who was watching the road, announced the butcher's cart coming to fetch calves : a butcher, he's a man that handles gold, or rather paper, by the shovelful !—then she gave this further item of information :

"There's our lady, Madame Bermance, coming back from mass. She goes every morning."

"She's got the time to," sourly remarked Virginie.

"And very natural too," Claudine added, "she goes to pray for her son."

"You've lost two, and you don't go."

"I pray here, I do ; the Vicar told me so. He who works prays ; very handy it is. And then I've got a whole family at my apron-strings. She has no one now, no husband and no son."

15. Anastasie, who was continuing her survey, announced : "The postman is stopping her. He's giving her a letter."

"There's nothing more for her to wait for," said Pauline Grattier, desirous of winning the good graces of all. "She has the whole day to read it."

"All the same, she's looking at it ; she's opening it and stopping. It looks as if there still are things that interest her."

That Madame Bermance should in fact have stopped on the road and that, in spite of the cold, she had raised her black veil to read this letter just given her by the postman, anxious to save himself a journey, instead of waiting to open it till she had got in, by the corner of her fire, there was apparently nothing in all this capable of occupying their curiosity, were it not that the observation of country-folk consists in putting a thousand insignificant things together.

29. "That's the way she used to stop last year, when she got letters from Monsieur André."

"Monsieur André:" which of them had pronounced this name with a mixture of familiarity and respect, if not Claudine, who had more of the family tradition? "Monsieur André": the whole five of them saw him again at that moment, for their purple hands remained lifted in the same way for a second or two: tall, slender, gay, with clear-cut features, and a fine light laugh as well, with a hunter's cap on his head, a pipe in his mouth, a stick in his hand. He was a leader of men and coaxed the women, then! Witness to that these five faded creatures, wrinkled and chapped, who visualise him with pleasure when he has been dead two good months, December 25th 1915, at Hartmannsweilerkopf. Claudine, whose own heart has bled twice, is even rather ashamed of herself; she tries to evoke that one of her two sons who was killed at the same place, and behold, she finds it hard to fix him as clearly. The truth is the poor lad of twenty had not so clearly defined a personality.

"Monsieur André!" repeated Anastasie as if enraptured, "he was such a fine fellow!"

But Virginie, irritated by this popularity which yet had touched her, began to mutter:

"He didn't do any more than anyone else."

Her usual adversary did not allow this assertion to pass unchallenged.

"Rubbish! He was wounded last year, and he went back before the end of his leave with a face like a turnip and a worse limp than your boy."

This personal allusion roused up Virginie's anger.

"Yes, but he got a medal, and they made him captain, at his age!"

"It isn't the old wethers that lead the flock."

"He got more honours."

"*And* he deserved them, too. You ask the soldiers. What do *you* know about it?"

"I know what I do know about those Bermances whose shoes you're always licking."

66. "You know just exactly what we know about them. When the father died, fifteen or twenty years ago, at the height of his powers—and what a man he was! the son was like him, only pleasanter—he was the man that was at the head of the electric power station. If only he'd lived, he'd have been the greatest man round here, and it isn't in old Chapareillan that he'd have stopped. The Dovecot wouldn't have been enough for him. And now there's the son killed at Vieil-Armand when he was going to follow in his father's footsteps. You aren't going to attack the lady now she is left alone."

"She's rich enough to defend herself."

"Oh, Jérémie Basset, her farmer, is richer than she is, to-day as ever is, for all the rent he pays her! And then she gives to all the poor."

"A fine virtue to give when you've got!"

"I'd like to see you at it: those who envy the goods of others, it isn't because they want to give them away."

82. The look-out interrupted this unamiable dialogue.

"She's still reading her letter," said Anastasie Mollard. "Looks as though there were a lot in it."

"Perhaps she is arranging to sell the Dovecot," hinted Pauline Grattier. "It's very large for a lone woman."

"You can divide up fields and meadows." "But not houses."

On this supposition, they made a valuation of the Dovecot estate—buildings, garden, farms, and meadows—when the wise Claudine intervened:

“ She left Grenoble to settle down here : she isn’t going to fly off like that, without warning. No, it’s still her son who is upsetting her.” —*The Resurrection of the Body.*

12. Fame.

The great scientist Puyrenard had never been rich, but since the war he had been frankly poor. Fame has its obligations : the greater part of his money went to distant relatives who had told him of their straitened circumstances. For twenty years he had occupied a fairly large flat in a middle-class corner of the Ternes district, where everybody knew him, bowed to him, smiled at him with respectful familiarity—so much so that he had the cosy impression of being at home not only in his own house, but in his street and in a circle of neighbouring streets.

Well, he had given up the only luxury of his existence : comfortable quarters. For economy’s sake, he had gone to live in a vast block in the Epinettes quarter, where were to be found modest flats in front and a crowd of rooms on yards and backyards.

17. And there he felt a painful impression of banishment : nobody would or nobody ventured to know him. There was not even the conventional bow of tenants who meet within the house ; if he was the first to make a vague salutation, they pretended not to see or not to understand.

He did not ask to be popular ; but he, who was satiated with the homage of the great of this world and now scarcely felt any gratification at it, he was sensitive to the lack of consideration in his insignificant neighbours, he noticed it, thought about it, and suffered from it. . . .

* * * *

Last winter : the period of the severe cold. In the little

flat next to Puyrenard's, a child is ill. The mother has called in the old doctor who is working the practices of several colleagues serving in the army, and who, unable to succour all the various ailments offered to his inspection, only manages to bear up against discouragement by a pretence of roughness and impatience.

"What, madam, no fire in this room ! Hurry up and light one. You must have heat to make the measles come out—if they didn't come out, your child would die."

38. Gestures of a woman in desperation. "But, doctor, as tenant of a flat, I have no claim on the municipal coal, and I can't get any anywhere."

"Umph, madam ! people that haven't got coal burn wood."

A rough piece of mimicry ; the doctor has disappeared.

The poor mother has understood. She laughs and she cries : what an idiot one is sometimes, one gets miserable, and does not think of the simplest things . . . If you cannot get coal, there is still the furniture to burn. . . .

By chance Monsieur Puyrenard possesses a saw, but he cannot bring himself to do the service asked of him : to break up the chairs, the tables, the friendly things that have aided the family on their way through life.

But what is to be done, then ? He has no fuel himself, the most favoured persons have only their bare requirements . . . and there is not an instant to be lost.

55. Monsieur Puyrenard is in his frock coat with his black tie, he hurries to get his hat, he picks up the empty bucket, and upon my word, off he boldly goes from door to door, asking for a lump of coal, just one lump. It doesn't look much—and yet his collection produces in the end a sufficient quantity to heat the sick child's room.

After that, there is really nothing more to be done than to resume every morning his beggar's round. The fire crackles uninterruptedly, and at the end of a fortnight, the doctor declares that the dear little fellow has come out in spots in the normal way and is safe.

65. Monsieur Puyrenard doesn't even want Mamma to thank him, but what a surprise ! The neighbours who had no respect for his status as a distinguished scientist begin to honour him for his gifts as a mendicant. They address towards him the various salutations, smiles, nods and winks which mean : " Sir, I know you ; I know what distinguishes you ; I appreciate your social accomplishments. . . . "

Once his fame has been started, it has soon managed to assume imposing proportions. The other day, from his first-floor window looking on to a backyard, Monsieur Puyrenard witnessed a new game which was nothing more or less than the coal-hunt, an urchin of six years, Totor, acting " the old boy on the main staircase," and a dozen " walkers-on," girls and boys, playing the parts of the tenants he begged from. —*Good Souls.*

13. *Argoval.*

The evening twilight was falling over the countryside. A gentle breeze came with it, a breeze as soft as words.

At the end of the village, towards the fields, soldiers off duty were walking about, following their noses. We were ending the day in peace. We enjoyed that vague laziness whose charm one appreciates when one is really weary. The weather was fine : we were at the beginning of our rest-camp ; and we day-dreamed. The evening seemed to make

men's faces stand out more clearly before it shrouded them in gloom, and their brows reflected the serenity of things.

10. Sergeant Suilhard came up to me and took my arm. He led me away.

"Come on," he said to me, "I'm going to show you something." The environs of the village abounded in rows of great, calm trees by which we passed; and from time to time their mighty limbs, under the impulse of the wind, slowly yielded themselves to some majestic motion.

Suilhard went in front of me. He took me into a sunk road which twisted between high banks; on each side grew a border of saplings whose crests were closely interwoven. We walked for some moments surrounded by tender green. A last gleam of light, which struck slantwise across this road, multiplied in the foliage points of pale yellow light as round as golden coins.

24. "Pretty," I said. He said nothing; he was casting his eyes from side to side. He stopped. "That must be it." He made me climb by a little piece of road into a field surrounded by a huge square of great trees, and filled with the scent of cut hay.

"Hullo," I observed, noticing the ground, "it's all trampled down here. There's been some sort of a ceremony." "Come on," said Suilhard.

He took me into the field, not far from the entrance. There was a group of soldiers there talking in hushed voices. My companion pointed. "That's where it was," he said.

A very low post, hardly three feet high, was set up a few paces away from the hedge, which at this point was composed of young trees.

"That's where they shot the soldier of the 204th this morning," he said. "They put the stake up in the night. They brought the chap along at daybreak, and it was the

men of his squad who killed him. He tried to dodge his turn in the trenches ; while they were taking over he remained behind, then slipped back to cantonments on the quiet. He didn't do anything else ; no doubt they meant to make an example of him."

We went closer to the conversation of the others.

48. "Oh no, not a bit of it," said one. "He wasn't a ruffian, not one of these hard cases you see about. We started off together. He was a plain chap like you or me, no more and no less. He had been in the front line from the beginning, my boy, and I never saw him drunk, I didn't."

52. "Better tell it all : unluckily for himself, he had a bad record. There were two of them, you know, that tried it on. The other got two years' cells. But Cajard, through a sentence he got before he joined up, didn't get the benefit of extenuating circumstances. He had once played some prank while drunk when he was a civvy."

"You can see a little blood on the ground when you look," said a stooping man.

"They went through the whole bag of tricks, the ceremony from A to Z : colonel on horseback, degradation ; then they tied him up to this little post, this cattle post. He must have had to kneel down or sit down with such a short post."

66. "You couldn't understand it," said a third after a silence, "if it weren't for that business of an example the sergeant was talking about."

On the stake were inscriptions and protests scribbled by the troops. A rough Military Cross, cut out in wood, was nailed to it, bearing the words "To Cajard, called up since August 1914 : France : a token of gratitude."

—*Under Fire.*

14. The Jewish Lovers.

When they had crossed the gloomy Polish plain, the great road of endless crosses, cut by marshes and birchwoods, Reb Amram and Hertz Wolf, son of Reb Eljé Lébowitz, plunged into the Carpathian forest, haunt of the eagle, the bear and the wild goat. There in this season often resound the flourishes of the hunting horns of the great Hungarian or Polish lords. There again are to be seen passing the carriages of rich Israelites who, with their fine boots and a plume in their hats, resemble the poor Jews in their caftans only in their inmost hearts. . . . Amram Trébitz and his son-in-law sneaked through the forest, without making more noise than the owl that glides between the branches, without leaving more traces than the worm on moss.

14. Mountains, trees, waters gushing forth everywhere, and enchanted castles lost in the depths of the woods, the son of Reb Eljé had never seen the like ! Yet think not that he found any pleasure in contemplating this new landscape, nor the lovely autumn already breathed on by winter and dying in solitude, nor the quiet lakes in the folds of the mountains, nor the cascades of sapphire and silver, nor the dream-castles hanging in the mist 'twixt heaven and earth ! And above all, fancy not that the tumult of a love to be cast a haze before his eyes ! No, neither nature nor love have ever occupied a Jew of Poland or Upper Hungary. Hertz Wolf does not gaze on the woods, Hertz Wolf does not think of love. He is merely inquiring of his future father-in-law as to the number of Torahs possessed by the community ; where they come from, who copied them ; whether there are to be found at Hounfalou many persons learned in the study of the Law ; whether, in the evening, men assemble to discuss Talmudic problems, and whether

over there they prefer the Talmud to the Kabbala. And Reb Amram, hearing these remarks, congratulated himself in his heart on giving his daughter so perfect a husband . . .

35. Old Hannah served the travellers a milk soup with bran in it. Hertz Wolf ate with lowered eyes, his long reddish corkscrew curls almost dipping in the soup, so afraid was he that his glance might fall on the daughter of Amram. Is it not said in the Talmud : " He who but casts an eye on the little finger of a maiden has sinned in licentiousness " ? And why should he have looked at her ? She is a Jewish girl : is not that enough ? The choice of a bride belongs only to the Master of the world, and this choice has been fixed from all eternity. Whether her nose be thick or thin, her figure straight or crooked, such are details to which only a coarse peasant or an unclean gipsy can pay attention. Whether her hair be long or short, abundant or scanty, fair or chestnut—can that interest a man of sense, seeing that, the day after her marriage, her head will be shaven to take a satin wig ?

51. " Is it a husband for our daughter ? " old Hannah asked herself, examining the stranger, " or some Yechiba bachour (student of the Law) whom Amram has picked up by the way and brought back in his carriage ? " . . . " Is it a bridegroom for me ? " Guitélé asked herself, not that she was any more disturbed by love than the son of the Sofer (scribe) ; but it is a shame to a woman and a sign of Heaven's malediction to grow old without husband and children.

When the soup was finished, Reb Amram said to his wife :

60. " Go to Solomon Schwartz and ask him if he can sleep the bachour to-night." Then only they understood that the stranger was not an ordinary traveller, but the man whom the Holy Law forbids to sleep under the roof of the maiden the Lord has chosen for him.

The old woman hastened at once to the neighbour Solomon. And Guitélé, having thus learned her fate, crossed her hands before her and left the hut of boughs, without even casting a glance on this unknown man with whom she was to spend her life.

—*The Shadow of the Cross.*

15. *The White Tower.*

For a long time the old tower, scantily furnished, had served as the abode of the gardener at the big house ; but at the beginning of the war, Mesdemoiselles Baudrier, whose income had for the time being been unfavourably affected by it, had decided to let it to temporary visitors. For four years, one tenant had succeeded another at the White Tower ; but in spite of the precautions they took, Mesdemoiselles Baudrier had never yet seen the dreamed-of guest appear. Thus, discouraged from pursuing an experiment which so far had brought them more annoyance than profit, they had resolved to keep the keys of the White Tower, when one morning their old servant Anthelma came and announced to them that a young lady, calling to look at it, was waiting in the drawing-room.

14. The first thought of the two sisters was to order the visitor to be told that the Tower was no longer to let ; but, helped on by curiosity, they agreed emphatically that the action of this individual, who perhaps had come a very great distance, called for them to give the reply themselves.

“ And then she looks like a real lady,” added the servant ; “ she isn’t like that one before.”

“ Then ask her to be good enough to wait for us,” said Mademoiselle Olympe. The maid went out ; the two sisters looked at each other.

"It is quite understood that we accept no offer?" asked Mademoiselle Adelaide.

25. "In principle, yes," replied her sister; "but it would be well to foresee a case in which too hasty a refusal might leave us with regrets . . . This person is perhaps very agreeable . . ."

"It is true we do live in such a lonely spot!"

"Not to mention that Octave goes off nearly every day."

"Anyhow," concluded Mademoiselle Olympe, "don't let's decide anything yet; and as we must act cautiously, you can go and receive her alone at first, which will allow you not to bind yourself completely; and afterwards we shall be able to agree on a definite reply."

35. Having thus said, the worthy Olympe, who loved not to be surprised in her dressing-gown, went off to her room; while the good Adelaide, still surprised at her sister's decision, which, as usual, it was not for her to discuss, went without undue haste down the long corridor which led to the drawing-room, whose door had remained open. . . .

. . . When the visitor said good-bye to the two sisters, the White Tower was let. The first notes of the noon Angelus sounded, and Mesdemoiselles Baudrier, who were hospitable by nature, wanted to keep the young lady; but she excused herself, saying her father was awaiting her in the village inn, where, after a light meal which had been ordered, they were to return to their carriage.

48. A final bow, and the visitor gracefully disappeared into the shadow of the great avenue, before the fascinated gaze of the two sisters, who had come with her as far as the front gate. "I think we are in luck's way," said the good Adelaide; "she is really charming."

"Not to mention that with her father we have a fourth for bridge," replied the other.

56. Before sitting down to table, Mademoiselle Adelaide

Baudrier, who did all things in orderly fashion, wrote in her diary : " To-day, June, let the White Tower by the year to Mademoiselle Jacqueline de Prade, to be lived in by her and her father, and this for the sum of . . . "

" By the way," she said turning to her sister, " you *did* mention the price to her ? "

" What are you thinking of ? Could I be bothered with that sort of thing ? " replied Olympe, putting on her most majestic air, " but you . . . "

" She didn't ask me anything, and, to tell the truth, I didn't think of it. . . . Anyhow it will be easy for me to repair the omission."

" No, Octave will see to it ; it is a man's business rather than ours."

" Poor Octave ! " exclaimed the good Adelaide as she shut the book ; " one would really say you don't know our beloved nephew. If he is the one who has to attend to it, I might as well write down at once : *Gratis pro Deo.*"

—*The Vicar of Avranches.*

16. *The Death of the Earl of Kendale.*

On the third of June, 1914, the Earl of Kendale had gone to Belfast to take over a superb car which he had just bought. He came back, bringing a little Kodak as a present for his wife. It was agreed that they should try the car and the camera on the following day.

The morning of this next day was bright and rainless. The young couple set off. They took on their excursion Antiope's foster-sister, Edith Stewart, who occupied the combined post of secretary and companion to the Countess

of Kendale, together with Edith's brother, little Robert, a child of twelve.

12. The tragedy took place some mile and a half from the mansion. The car, driven by the Earl of Kendale, was following the overhanging road, very narrow in places, which overlooks the shore from about three hundred feet up. At the particularly picturesque corners, one of the young women would get out and take the car and its occupants. At a given moment, at the point called Carrigna-curra, it was Antiope's turn to take the photographs. She got out and went and leaned against the rock. Later on, she was to remember only these trifling details : trying, with her hands rounded above the little square of whitish glass across which the clouds were racing, to seize the moving picture of the car, she felt herself discommoded by the sun which had just come out. "A little more to the left, if you can," she said. Once more, she was not looking directly at the car. She could not see. It was three cries, three terrible cries, blended into one, which made her raise her head. For one second, on the level of the road, she saw the plunging bonnet, the two grey tyres, quite new. Then, nothing more.

30. The poor remains of Edith Stewart, like those of little Robert, were laid according to Antiope's express wish in the private cemetery of the Earls of Antrim. This graveyard, thirty feet square, hollowed out in a rock which faces the portcullis of the castle of Dunmore, has in front of it as far as the eye can see the never-changing billows of the northern ocean. Seagulls perch on its crosses. When the little boy and the girl had as a special honour found their resting-place there, Antiope, under her long widow's weeds, herself drove the funeral car of the Earl of Kendale along the cliffs as far as Portrush station.

40. She got on to the train which bore towards the

south-western counties her husband's body. Down there, there were the same painful formalities over again. Along the line of the hedges, the peasants, cap in hand, watched as she passed this woman in mourning, henceforth mistress of the earldom of Kendale. Then she took up her abode in the castle. Two months later, at the moment when the universal war broke out, the country people saw a quite white-headed old man being pushed about in a rubber-tyred carriage across the lawns of the park. The Earl of Antrim had come to join his daughter. Since then, neither of them had left Kendale.

—*The Giants' Causeway.*

17. *The Widow.*

With his mother, in the park streaked with sunlight, Omer was walking beneath the boughs that the gusts of wind were stripping bare. November was beginning. The last fine days had been gently beaming for a week. The dead leaves crackled beneath one's feet in the paths. After the coppery-green avenues appeared the pond ruffled by the northerly wind. The dry reeds were curtsying round it. The child gazed at his mother in her long dark clothes, with her shoulders wrapped in a cashmere shawl stirred by the wind. Her black hair, mingled with grey, was done up in the shape of a helmet with a plaited crest. As though fain to see in it pictures of old days, her wandering eyes, made weary by grief, watched the joy of the child. Her face was like that of a young and melancholy man rather than of a woman. This mannish appearance surprised Omer, who noticed it for the first time. Why was his mother's skin thus getting darker, getting marked with

freckles? Why did the skin cling to the bony structure of the face? And what was she striving to see in her son, the unhappy widow?

19. "If you only knew!" she groaned, "my brother Edme has fallen under his horse, ripped up by a bursting bomb . . . a long way away, right in the depths of Russia. . . . Your uncle Augustin's regiment has been cut up. . . . And the whole French army is coming back from those parts. . . . How many battles before they reach here! How Edme must be suffering in the cart that is bringing him back! Oh dear! . . . And will grandfather remain in Prussia with the cavalry brigade? No doubt he will hurry off out there, like the others. His back is hurting him now. . . . Oh dear! Ah, it's too much sorrow, too much! Always trembling, always weeping! It's wicked to kill so many brave healthy men for the glory of one man. Ah, that Napoleon! Will you escape him at least, my son, will you escape that monster, that nation-killer?"

33. She shook her clenched fist at the horizon, then flung her arms round the child. He knew not what to reply, anxious as he was to play with the ball; but he thought he mustn't. She could not cease her lamentations:

"Your father was my joy, my heart and my hope. Do you remember him? He was taller than other men. His strength tamed all. His soul remained noble even in the most trifling things."

Omer was timidly unplaiting the red, green, and white fringes of the shawl, comparing the pictures in the border—a white oval with a yellow palm, a red oval with a white palm—wondering what queer things were represented by the patterns of the Hindu stuff. His mother went on:

46. "Believe me, my son, men are perverse things. Your great-grandfather used to declare long ago that the

Revolution would change everything and everybody, that after it people would love and help one another. What a dream ! Napoleon seems harder and more wicked than the kings, and he destroys a great many more people . . . On the earth is nothing but terror and death ! The only consolation is to hope for the heavenly life, the immortality of our souls that God will save ! We are sent here below to win our salvation through grief. Oh, pray then, pray with me without ceasing ! ”

55. Omer had no very clear ideas on this topic. He certainly had some suspicions of the wickedness of mankind ; all the same he considered himself provided with means to overcome it in the future. After all, Madame Héricourt ruled the mansion, the servants, the farmers, and the dealers. Wasn't that enough ? Besides, he didn't neglect his prayers : they assure entrance into that heaven where one undoubtedly sits on a throne, amid the music of the angels. . . .

63. He picked up the ball again and made it bounce. Médor could be heard barking furiously at the gate, behind the noise of a carriage. Omer thought that no doubt a chaise would bring back Uncle Edme from Russia. It would be terrible to see the sick man, near death too, perhaps. The ball rolled. Mama Virginie was reading. They were a long way away from the house, in the lower part of the grounds. From there the lawns stretched right up to the buildings. In the distance, the windows of the upper floors received the rays of sunlight between the stonework of the windows. And seen far away the front of the house seemed quite lit up. The statues of the nymphs, soiled by the birds, pointed out the way towards it at the crossways of the avenues, in the midst of the sheets of water covered with wild water-lilies.

—*The Child of Austerlitz.*

18. *The Death of Claude.*

In the evening, one of the beaters cooked me my meal. But it was not Claude's soup, nor his mushroom omelets, nor his hashes. At nightfall, one of those storms that burst among the mountains without one's having been able to foresee them, forced me to remain inside the hut.

"Claude must be at Bonneval," said I to my men.

"He'll stay there the night," one of them replied.

8. And they all laughed loudly in chorus. I imagined it was an allusion to his taste for drinking—for I knew his reputation as a drinker, not habitually, but rather on occasion—and I did not follow it up. Meantime the hut was shaken by the tempest, as though some mountain demon had been swinging it about like a salad strainer. Unpleasant watercourses were cutting themselves out in the roofing, and I had great difficulty in getting off to sleep. When I woke up in the night, a loose slate allowed me to see the sky full of stars. They had that unusual brightness which they take on on the eves or morrows of rain. "Good weather for to-morrow's hunt," thought I as I turned over. I woke up late and was able to verify the correctness of my forecast. The day announced itself as clear and fresh. I was sorry I had allowed Claude a late return.

23. "Isn't he back?" I inquired.—"Not yet."

And once more they laughed. About eleven o'clock, put out of patience, I went down as far as Benoît's hut. I found this latter almost naked, doing his washing and putting his clothes to dry. Seeing him thus rigged out, I gaily asked him :

"Did you go out yesterday evening in the storm, then, to have got so wet?" For I use "tu" to Claude, who is familiar; but not to Benoît (who is) more serious and distant.

"I've been chasing a cow," he explained to me.

"Haven't you seen Claude?" "No."

"He took a wild-goat to Bonneval, and hasn't got back yet."

"It's a long way."

"Didn't you see him yesterday evening when he started?" "No."

"And hasn't Maddalena come up? Yesterday was her day."

"Yes." "She didn't come as far up as us."

"There's the post; she left it here. She came up yesterday, late."

"So much the worse for him," I declared as I left him; "we'll go hunting without Claude."

49. This hunt, which for one thing we cut short, was unsuccessful. My beaters beat the alders and the bushes without energy. We returned discomfited. I quite intended to work off my bad temper on the laggard, but still Claude had not returned. This time nobody joked. In the whole annals of hunters, a night of drinking has never taken up the whole of the next day. Obviously there was something abnormal about it; perhaps a fall on the descent with his burden, perhaps a violent quarrel in some Bonneval tavern. Had I not been obliged to intervene once already to mollify the police? Provided with a lantern, I went back after supper as far as Benoît Couvert's hut. Its door was shut; I called in vain, the shepherd must have gone off. He had taken the precaution beforehand to shut up the animals in their enclosure. No doubt he had been sent for to Bessans. No hesitation now remained possible: there had been an accident.

65. Fatigue and uncertainty stopped me from going down the same night to find out. I waited till the following morning and set out as early as possible. When I landed

at the Couverts' house, the family, all complete, was in the stable. No one could have been to bed. The period of cries and lamentations seemed to be over, and that of dejection had succeeded it. Each one remained silent, even little Jean-Marie leaning up against his grandmother. This silence was more pathetic and impressive than any other manifestation. I scarcely dared to disturb it by my questionings :

76. "What has happened?"

It was naturally old Jean-Pierre who replied to me, slowly, weighing his words, retaining his majesty even amid his paternal anguish :

"They're looking for him."

"He hasn't come back?" "No."

"How do you know?"

"The evening before last he had come to show the children the wild goat before he took it to Bonneval, and to borrow our neighbour Péráz' mule, since our own had gone up to the hut with Maddalena. Yesterday morning, the mule came back from Bonneval quite alone, and Charbon before him, and he woke us up."

Charbon was the little black dog who used to go about with Claude. The old man went on :

92. "We opened to let Charbon in. Why had he come back without his master? We thought he had got lost on the road. He kept on barking, and there was no way of making him leave off. At dawn, not seeing Claude, who was supposed to come back through Bessans to give us the money from the sale, I followed the dog with Etienne. He took us as far as the butcher's at Bonneval, from the butcher's to the inn, from the inn to the return road."

"He was going again over the road he had gone with his master."

"That's so. Before it gets to the huts of Barmanère, the

road goes alongside the torrent. There Charbon howled like murder and led us to the edge of the water. But we didn't find anything."

"The current may have carried him away. Remember St. Landry."

105. St. Landry, who is particularly honoured in the valley, was a monk of Piedmont who came to convert Bessans and Bonneval, which had remained Saracen. The inhabitants of Bonneval threw him into the Arc. He was only retrieved at Lanslebourg, dead, but without injuries, although the torrent had rolled him down more than eight miles.

"Yes, the Arc is full at the moment. It may have carried him down. Not very far. They are dragging now from Bonneval and from Bessans."

"So long as they haven't found his body, we must hope."

"No. Dogs aren't like people. They don't make mistakes."

117. At this verdict, which his father pronounced with decision, Benoît took his departure. They had sent for him the day before by little Jean-Marie, but he could not desert the flock. It was his obvious duty. Meantime, old Pétronille had knelt down on the flagstones of the stable. We all imitated her, the children, Maddalena, Jean-Pierre the head of the family, and myself. She had put her spectacles on her nose, and in a book of Hours printed in big letters she was reading the prayers for the commendation of the soul. In the pauses between the invocations, one heard the mule munching his hay, or driving off the flies by raising his hoof or swinging his tail.

129. The poor woman had got to the Prayer, getting through it with great difficulty, unaccustomed as she was to reading, when we heard trampling in the yard. I got up first, with a presentiment of the funeral procession, and

rushed out. I was not mistaken. There was a regular throng of worthy persons from Bessans and even from Bonneval, moved by the trouble or attracted by curiosity, round a bier on which the body was stretched, but hidden by a covering. I raised this covering and saw the face of my faithful hunting companion. His beard was tangled ; and his eyes, which it had been impossible to shut, were almost terrifying to meet in their last expression. No doubt he had realised the danger of the cold water, and his look kept a record of this vision of terror. The little black dog, his tongue hanging out, completely done up, had lain down beside his master. Meantime, no one came out of the Couverts' house. They knew the tidings, like me they had heard the noise which announced them, they were waiting for Death to enter.

—*The House that died.*

19. *Winter.*

In the morning Tit'Bé used to jump out of bed long before the dawn to go and see if the great blocks of birch-wood had done their duty and burned all through the night ; if unluckily the fire had died down, he lit it again at once with birch-bark and cypress branches, piled up thick logs on the first flame, and rushed back to plunge under the brown blankets and frieze to wait till the kindly heat had again filled the house.

10. Outside, the neighbouring wood and even the fields they had won from the forest were now but a foreign, hostile world, at which they gazed with curiosity through the little square windows. Sometimes this world was curiously lovely, with a frozen and so to speak motionless beauty

made up of a very blue sky and a blazing sun with snow glittering beneath it ; but the equal purity of the blue and white was equally cruel, and allowed one to guess at the murderous cold.

18. On other days the weather would get milder and the snow fell fast, hiding all things, both the ground, and the brushwood which it covered little by little, and the dark line of the wood which disappeared behind the screen of thick-strewn flakes. Then the next day the sky would be clear again ; but the wind blew from the north-west, terrible. The snow it whirled up in powder passed in gusts through the burnt-out clearings and the glades, and piled up against all the obstacles which broke the wind. To the south-east of the house it left a gigantic cone, or perhaps formed between the house and the cow-shed mounds five feet high to which one had to take shovels to make a way through ; whereas on the side from which the wind was coming the soil was scraped, laid bare by its great unceasing blast.

31. On such days the men would hardly go out unless to go and see to the animals, and they ran back, their skins cut by the damp cold of the snow-crystals melting in the heat of the house. Old Chapdelaine used to pull off the icicles formed on his moustache, slowly remove his sheep-skin-lined overcoat, and settle down close to the stove with a sigh of pleasure.

“ The pump isn’t freezing, is it ? ” he would ask. “ Is there plenty of wood in the house ? ”

He was assuring himself that the frail wooden fortress was provided with water, wood, and food, and then gave himself up to the luxury of winter quarters, smoking numberless pipes, while the women got ready the evening meal. The cold made the nails in the plank walls crack with reports like pistol-shots ; the stove roared away,

packed with medlar-wood ; outside the wind whistled and howled like the noise of a besieging horde.

48. "It must be wicked weather in the woods !" thought Maria.

And she perceived she had spoken aloud.

"In the woods it isn't so bad as it is here," replied her father. "Where the trees aren't half thick, you don't feel the wind. I can tell you, Esdras and Da'Bé aren't so badly off."

"No?" It was not of Esdras nor of Da'Bé that she had thought first.

—*Maria Chapdelaine.*

20. *The Mountain.*

Aoûn, son of the Aurochs, loved the underground country. In it he fished for blind fishes or pallid crayfish, in the company of Zoûhr, son of the Earth, the last of the Men-without-Shoulders, who had escaped from the massacre of his race by the Red Dwarfs.

6. Aoûn and Zoûhr, for days on end, would follow the cave-river. Often, the bank was only a narrow ledge ; sometimes they had to crawl through corridors of porphyry, gneiss, or basalt. Zoûhr used to light torches of terebinth ; the purple light was reflected back from the quartz vaults and the inexhaustible waters. Then they would lean over to see colourless beasts swimming, or obstinately seek outlets, or continue their way as far as the wall from which gushed out the river. There they used to stop for long. They would have liked to pass this mysterious barrier against which the Oulhamr had been dashing themselves for six springs and five summers.

18. One morning long ago they found themselves on the banks of the river. They had seen the sun rise like a scarlet furnace, and now the light was yellow. Zoûhr knew that he enjoyed watching the waters flow, but Aoûn tasted of this pleasure without knowing it. They made their way towards the cavern country. There the mountain lay before them, high and inaccessible : its crest formed a long wall. To the north and south, whither it stretched endlessly, it raised its impassable masses. Aoûn and Zoûhr longed to pass it ; all the Oulhamr wished as much.

28. They had come from the North-west ; for fifteen years they had been marching towards the East and South. In the beginning they had been driven forth by cataclysms ; then, seeing that the land became continually more desirable and richer in game, they had grown used to this immense journey. And they were losing patience before the mountain.

Aoûn and Zoûhr rested beside the reeds, beneath the black poplars. Three mammoths, huge and benevolent, passed on the other bank. Saïgas could be seen dashing off ; a rhinoceros passed waddling near a headland. Vague bursts of energy stirred the son of Naoh ; his soul, more wandering than the soul of the storks, longed to conquer space. And when he got up again, he went upstream, until there appeared the wild gap from which the river broke. Bats fluttered through the gloom ; a wild longing to roam enraptured the young man ; he said to Zoûhr :

44. " There are other lands beyond the mountain ! "

Zoûhr replied : " The river comes from the lands of the sun ! "

His dull eye, which was like that of reptiles, held the glittering eyes of Aoûn. The blue shadow became black. Zoûhr lit up one of the branches he had brought. They

could have moved about without a light, so well did they know the country. For long they advanced, passing through corridors and crossing chasms, and towards the evening they slept after roasting some crayfish.

They were wakened by a shock which seemed the trembling of the earth itself. Stones were heard rolling, then silence returned. Their anxiety died away when it was scarcely born, and they slept once more. But when they began to advance again, they found the road impeded by unknown blocks. Then memories rose up in Zoûhr :

“ The earth trembled ! ” he declared.

62. Aoûn did not understand and did not seek to understand. His mind was lively, bold and short-sighted ; it dealt with immediate difficulties or the movements of living things. In him was growing an impatience which drove him faster on his way, so that before the end of the second day they reached the wall at which the underground country stopped short.

To see better, Zoûhr set light to a new terebinth torch : its glare, rising along the gneiss, mingled the life of the flame with the mysterious life of the minerals. The comrades shouted ; a wide fissure had been made in the wall.

“ It was the earth ! ” said Zoûhr.

75. Aoûn was advancing and leaning into the gap. It was wider than a man. Though he knew the dangers of freshly-riven stone, his impatience bore him towards the crevasse. Walking was difficult ; it was constantly necessary to crawl or to step over blocks. Zoûhr followed the son of the Aurochs ; there was in him an obscure affection which made him share the other's dangers, and transformed his prudence into rashness.

The passage became so narrow that they had to go sideways ; stifling air seemed to issue from the rock. Then a

sharp projection made the pass narrower still ; and as they could not stoop, the adventure seemed fruitless.

87. Drawing his axe of nephritic jade, Aoûn struck angrily, as he would have struck an enemy ; the projection rocked. The two warriors understood that it could be detached from the main rock. Zoûhr fixed his torch in a crack and joined his effort to that of Aoûn. The projection swayed further ; they pushed with all their might. The gneiss cracked, some stones rolled away, a dull thud was heard : the passage was free.

It grew wider ; they were able to walk without difficulty ; the air became purer and they found themselves in a cave. Full of excitement, Aoûn began to run, until he was stopped by the darkness, for Zoûhr was behind with the torch. But the delay was brief. The impatience of the Oulhamr spread to the Man-without-Shoulders, and they advanced in great strides.

100. Soon there filtered through a gleam of dawn, which became brighter as they went on ; the mouth of the cave showed a pass cut between two walls of granite. Very high up could be seen a strip of sky, the colour of the sapphire :

“ Aoûn and Zoûhr have crossed the mountain ! ” joyously cried the son of the Aurochs.

None the less this narrow defile, lost in the depths of the mountain, was still too much like the cave-country. Aoûn longed to see open country and would scarcely rest. The pass seemed endless. When they reached its end, the day was near its death, but their dream was fulfilled.

113. Before them stretched a long pasture-land which seemed to plunge into the heavens ; to right and left rose the mountain, a formidable world of stone, of silence and of storm, a world which seems unchangeable and which the drop of water hollows out, bears away, and untiringly dis-

solves. Aoûn and Zoûhr heard the beating of their hearts. Unbounded life was there, where streamed down all the fecundity of earth : the fate of men was bound up in the black flanks of the basalts, the peaks of granite, the porphyry glaciers, the gorges where roared the mountain stream and the gentle valleys where the fountain sang with its tender voice ; it was bound up with the armies of pines and the legions of beeches, the high pastures seen in the jagged peaks, the glaciers lost amid the mountain-tops, the lonely moraines. . . .

126. In a landscape of rock turrets, peaks and domes, the sun was about to die ; mountain sheep appeared mysteriously on the edge of an abyss ; an old bear, on a gneiss rock, spied out the solitude, while a bald eagle swung slowly beneath an amber-fringed cloud. A new land called to the adventurous soul of Aoûn and the dreamy spirit of the Man-without-Shoulders.

—*The Giant Cat.*

21. *The Prodigal Father.*

The funeral was fixed for the next day but one. Anne sat up for the first night. For the second they insisted on her lying down. She obeyed, but only after she had collected all the papers she could find in her father's safe. Having locked the door of her room, she began to go through them.

The lack of order to which these papers testified did not surprise Monsieur de la Ferté's daughter. She found no difficulty in realising that she and her mother were ruined.

10. She stood up. It was raining out in the night. She took a few steps across the room to warm herself. The wardrobe mirror sent her back her thin black figure, her

dress with its little cape, the ring of lace round the collar, her hands crossed shiveringly, white against the narrow dark bodice. In this moment, no doubt, her cheerless fate must have unrolled itself before her. Yet not a frown came and disturbed that face in which precocious gravity contrasted so oddly with youth. Mademoiselle de la Ferté pulled an armchair to the corner of the fire, threw a log on it, put out the lamp, sat down, and made no further movement. . . .

21. The funeral took place the next day at ten. The same day, about three, the lawyer was announced.

"It was I who asked him to look in, mamma," said Anne, as her mother intimated with a gesture that she was not able to receive him.

"Oh?" said Madame de la Ferté in dejection, "couldn't we put off till later . . ." Anne interrupted her, not without dryness :

"You can," said she, "always put off the moment for receiving money, not the moment for paying it. Show Maître Destouesse in."

32. The lawyer entered. There was a long conversation between him and Anne, a conversation into which Madame de la Forté, though invited several times to take part, entered only to excuse herself at once : "She didn't know, she couldn't remember ; and then, really, on the very day of the funeral, to expect her. . . ." Anne never insisted. Taking her eyes off the poor woman to look again at the lawyer : "All right, Maître Destouesse, let us admit that is so." It was always the supposition the least favourable to their interests of which she proposed the adoption as the provisional basis of these calculations. Not once, unfortunately, did this method prove incorrect in the course of the liquidation.

At the end of an hour, Maître Destouesse got up.

45. "Thank you," said Anne to him. "I'll come to bring you our reply to-morrow, for we want everything to go forward as quickly as possible."

"What reply?" inquired Madame de la Ferté, when the lawyer had left them.

"We still have to-night, mamma," replied Anne imperturbably, "to decide which house we shall sell, whether it is to be La Crouts or this one."

"Which house we shall sell?" said Madame de la Ferté. "But, God bless me, my poor child, you're going mad. Why do you want us to sell our houses?"

"Because we can no longer keep them. The farms have already been sold; now we must sell the houses, one of the two, at least."

59. "Sell a house, sell a house! What a hurry you are in! The farms were different. But a house is no small matter. Your poor father never would bring himself to it. Once again, why do you want us to sell a house?"

"Once again, because we are obliged to, mamma. Didn't you hear all that Maître Destouesse said just now, then?"

"What? What did he say? I heard you both talking figures. I might well not take it in, if you'll think, on the day of your father's burial. Really, if a stranger had been there, he would have thought we were only thinking about the money. . . ."

71. And Madame de la Ferté burst into sobs. Anne did not shrug her shoulders. Slowly and clearly, she explained to her mother the details of the conversation with the lawyer. As their complete capital, they now had only the two houses, the one in Dax and La Crouts, each estimated to be worth 80,000 francs. But both were mortgaged, the first for 35,000 francs, the second for 20,000 francs. Prudence commanded them to sell the one to free the other entirely. The remaining 25,000 francs would be invested, obtaining

if possible six or seven per cent. Maître Destouesse declared that this was within the realms of possibilities.

83. Madame de la Ferté wiped her eyes and kissed her daughter.

"I understand," she said, "I understand. You see that when I choose to take the trouble, I'm not so dense as all that on money questions. Let us sell, since we must. But I suppose you agree with me to keep the town house and sell La Crouts. . . ."

Anne shook her head.

"What," said Madame de la Ferté, surprised by her daughter's silence and gazing at her. "It's this house that you would. . . . But, my child, you can't mean it. The house where your father died, your grandfather, your grandmother, where I was born, where you were born, a house that has belonged to our family for two hundred years. . . . Have you so much as thought of what people will say about it all round? No, no, never, you hear me, so long as I live. . . . But for goodness' sake speak, say something. Why do you want us to sell this house, instead of selling La Crouts?"

100. Anne smiled sadly. "Mother," she said, "you forget that at La Crouts there are the dues from the land, and that we shall need them to live."

Madame de la Ferté clasped her hands.

"We've come to that, then, my poor child?"

"Yes, mother," said Anne.

They remained silent a few moments. Night invaded the room. Above the old cupboards, the copper and the pewter pans had disappeared, swallowed up in the gloom.

"So we shall have to go and live out there!" she said.

"The country round La Crouts is very fine in summer," murmured Anne.

"Yes, in summer, my poor girl. But—the winter!"

Mademoiselle de la Ferté made no reply. Her mother went on, almost in a whisper :

“ And . . . your convent school ? ”

“ I shan’t go back,” said Anne. She added : “ Besides, I had almost finished.”

“ Yes,” said her mother, “ but it was just the nicest year you still had to do.”

122. Anne made a vague gesture. Suddenly Madame de la Ferté burst into tears.

“ Mother, mother, do be calm,” said the girl, “ I beg of you.”

“ My poor child, my poor child,” stammered Madame de la Ferté, “ Forgive me. . . . What a life yours will be ! You may never get married.”

“ Ah,” cried Anne, in a tone which turned her mother cold, “ rather a thousand times remain an old maid than run the risk of marrying. . . .”

Both were silent, the one terrified by what she had been going to say, the other by what she had nearly heard. But already any attentive reader will have grasped that forgiveness of injuries was not at this date in the number of the virtues of which Mademoiselle de la Ferté could have thought of boasting.

—*Mademoiselle de la Ferté.*

22. *A Divorce.*

Madame Emma Grelin had not been married six months to Nicolas Grelin, deputy head-clerk in the Ministry of Public Obstruction, when she was compelled to observe in her surroundings certain inexplicable phenomena.

She was greatly disturbed about them. “ The 25th of March last,” she explained to her mother, Madame Radoire, “ Nicolas and I had gone to pay a call on our cousins

Desnoyaux. We didn't particularly enjoy it, the Desnoyaux live a long way out, by the Clignancourt Gate : but you can't neglect your family. The cousins asked us to have a cup of tea (that was very handsome from them, to start with), and we began to gossip. After some time, I looked at the clock : half-past five. It wasn't too late, we played a hand at bridge at which Nicolas lost ten francs. Then I looked at the clock again and saw that it had stopped : it still pointed to half-past five. Virginie Desnoyaux took out her watch : eight o'clock.

18. " You can't go back home at such a time : you must dine with us . . . take pot-luck."

Virginie was acting the amiable, but underneath she was wild. When I got back home I found on the kitchen dresser a slip of paper from my maid, asking me if we were playing with her, and informing me that since she couldn't put up with an unpunctual family, she preferred to go. And you know, mamma, all through the servant problem, I haven't yet been able to find another cook."

Some time afterwards, Madame Grelin's uncle, Celestin Radoire, invited the young couple to come to luncheon at La Ferté-sous-Jouarre, where he lived. Celestin Radoire was an old bachelor, very rich, on whose will Emma counted a great deal.

32. They had to take a train at the Eastern Station at 8.45 a.m. Madame Grelin and her husband made a hasty toilet. When they reached the station, they discovered that the big clock showed ten o'clock. They immediately sent a wire to Uncle Radoire, apologising as best they could, and went back home.

There, Emma was able to see that all her clocks had stopped. It was not surprising that they had missed the train. Neither was it surprising that Uncle Radoire got furiously angry and cut his niece off with a shilling.

43. On May 3rd, Emma Grelin, coming out of the theatre without being properly wrapped up, caught bronchitis. The doctor prescribed the application of a mustard plaster and strongly recommended that the invalid should keep it on six or seven minutes. Nicolas Grelin, it is but fair to admit, did his best to cure his young wife. He put the plaster on the spot indicated and exhorted Emma to be brave.

50. All the bravery in the world did not stop poor Emma from soon uttering fearful cries and begging her husband to take off the plaster. "Eight minutes!" replied Nicolas, "the doctor wants you to keep it on eight minutes!" "But it's at least a quarter of an hour." The husband looked at his watch and insisted that only a few instants had gone by so far. In the end, Madame Grelin sent the whole thing flying. Her skin was nearly blistered off; she called her husband a torturer and threatened him to go home to her mother.

Meantime Nicolas Grelin was again looking at his watch . . . it was not going. Let it be said straight away that Emma's tortures had hastened her recovery. She forgot her grievance and went with her husband to Plessis-sur-Loire, where Nicolas had a country cottage.

67. Plessis-sur-Loire is a minute village, served by an attempt at a station. The waiting-room and the station-master's office form only one room. When evening came, the young couple came and settled themselves in it to wait for the train which was to take them back to Paris; but there, at the end of five minutes, the stationmaster discovered, to his deep amazement, that the hands of his clock (which he had nevertheless wound up the evening before), remained motionless on their dial. Such a thing is quite enough to cause railway accidents.

The constant repetition of a similar phenomenon, then,

did not pass without thoroughly upsetting Madame Grelin. She betook herself to other tests and counter-tests. The clear result was, that when she was alone, the clocks and watches went regularly ; but that as soon as her husband appeared, they went no more. There was indeed in all this a curious concatenation of circumstances ; but it was not merely curious, it was terrifying.

84. How, indeed, can one arrange one's existence if one can never find out what time it is? To tell the truth, Nicolas had always had this lack of knowledge, since he could not possess any clock which showed the right time. But the stout fellow did not even dream of this. His life at the Ministry of Public Obstruction was so uniform and regulated, he had so long been obeying a subconscious reflex and a natural instinct that he never reached his office late, and left it a quarter of an hour before the regulation time rather than after it. But Emma, who was revealing herself as a methodical and order-loving woman, considered it unbearable not to know what hour of the day one had reached.

97. We have seen above that this fact of not having known the time had already cost her a legacy and a maid. It was thus necessary to know exactly where one stood. A chance was about to serve her. As she was calling one day on her friend, Madame Rouquin, she made the acquaintance of the famous Aristide Poliveau, the great scholar, the great authority on physical science.

Aristide Poliveau thought Emma pretty ; he made himself agreeable to her, and Madame Grelin, inspired to confidence, told him the tale of her troubles.

" Can I go on like this ? " she asked Poliveau ; " and do you think all this is only chance and coincidences, or that my husband really has this absurd power of stopping clocks ? "

112. "Have no doubt about it, dear lady," replied the scientist. "In all you tell me there is neither chance nor coincidence. It really is your husband who, by his mere presence, stops the hands from going on."

"But how can that be?"

"In my long career I have come across several examples of the same phenomenon. It can't be denied."

"How do you explain it?"

"Perhaps you have noticed when you are walking in the street, that at a certain moment a force which you cannot explain obliges you to turn round."

"Yes, indeed, that has happened to me several times."

"It is merely because some individual was following you and looking intently at your back."

"And from that you conclude?"

127. "I conclude that some men possess a peculiar magnetism which goes out and acts on you, and obliges you to a movement in which your will has no share. Science has often observed this phenomenon. It remains unexplained, but it is undeniable."

"But the clocks, my dear sir?"

"It must be the same thing with the clocks. My reason, seconded by my experience, does not forbid me to suppose that certain organisms may emit an electric force capable of influencing the spring of a clock and of preventing it from acting. I repeat that I have had several examples of it, and that this is how I have always explained the phenomenon."

"But then," said Emma, "it's terrifying!"

140. "Why terrifying?" gently replied Poliveau. "Taking it all round, it is only a habit to be acquired. You see well enough that your husband, who can never have known what time it was, has managed quite nicely all the same. It is perhaps a superstition to be always look-

ing at one's watch. The light of day keeps us well enough informed, and country people are guided by the position of the sun in the sky."

Then, becoming courtly, Poliveau added : " The faculty possessed by Monsieur Nicolas Grelin has at least this advantage, that when he is with you, he need never bother about the time."

152. Emma left the scientist, full of perplexity. When she got in, she wound up and put right three clocks and her wrist-watch. Her husband came in, dined, and after having read the paper, went peacefully to bed. When he was sound asleep, Madame Grelin went off with muffled steps to listen to the pendulums of the clocks. They were no longer moving. She put her watch to her ear : it was no longer making a sound. She lost her head ; and as soon as the day had come, she got dressed and dashed off to her lawyer's to instruct him to file a petition for divorce.

23. *The Phantom.*

" Has the loss of his son turned his brain ? " I asked myself. He suddenly stopped in front of me and said point-blank :

" Do you remember that dinner we gave here before the war, to celebrate Georges' success ? "

" Of course I haven't forgotten it, and I am glad to look back on it when I want to call up some happy vision of the past."

" That dinner was tragic. Possibly you didn't realise it. Bernin foretold our trouble, and Mervalle announced our bereavement."

13. " Mervalle ? He called up a great many ghosts."

" That Baronne de Boislevé, who saw her son appearing to her at the very second he was killed in the storming of

Puebla, I thought that was one of those stories meant to frighten women. So did you, perhaps. Well, it was true, literally true."

"Have you got hold of some other evidence on the subject?"

"Yes, my own evidence and my wife's. We have both had a similar vision."

22. I admit my incredulity. The queer events of everyday life have always been enough for my curiosity, without my needing to tack on to them our hallucinations and our dreams. I thus gazed on my host with some anxiety, afraid that grief had disordered a mind that had been clear and well arranged, and even inclined hitherto to admit only positive and scientifically demonstrated facts. I then turned towards the ladies as though to appeal for their help in this secret anxiety. But they were looking at him with emotion, waiting for what he was about to reveal to me, for what they knew and approved of in advance. He made up his mind, considering I was sufficiently prepared.

34. "On the 21st of this February, my wife and I were in this drawing-room. There was a coal shortage then, and the house was badly heated. But oughtn't one to suffer a bit too, behind the lines? So little, after the troubles our soldiers went through. I had packed the grate with wood blocks. It was green wood which kept crackling and giving out sparks. As I poked the fire, in spite of myself I made this reflexion: "There's fighting at Verdun." And Alice replied, as though she had had the same revelation at the same moment: "Yes, dear, fighting at Verdun." "How do you know?"—"How do you?" And in a second we found ourselves on our feet, face to face, dazed, terrified, not daring to speak to each other. I read in her eyes what I myself had seen; in mine, she saw her own vision.

47. We threw ourselves weeping into each other's arms, without having told our fears—not our fears, our certainty. I was the first to pull myself together. "It's absurd, my dear, my imagination and my affection are playing me tricks. I saw Georges there, standing in front of me"—Then she interrupted me: "With his forehead pierced. He raised his arms and fell." "How do you know?" "I saw him too. He was there, in front of that table." "Ah!" I exclaimed, "it's true, then. Our son is dead..." My poor wife did her best too to get her mind, both our minds, free of this nightmare. But after all, two people do not get hallucinations together.

59. I remembered Mervalle's stories. They aren't fictions. Our dying son had visited us from a distance. The whole evening through we could not throw off the horror of this vision. I sent out for some evening papers; the battle of Verdun had as a matter of fact begun. Since then, we lived in expectation of the news of our loss. Frightful days! We were no longer getting any news of our absent boy. At last we heard through his colonel that he had been missing on that evening of February 21st. We were sure of that already, and it told us nothing new. A different warning had been given us."

69. I had listened to this story absorbed, but not surprised, for I had expected it. When Falaise ceased speaking I showed no signs of agreement either. I was indeed unable to follow him along the road down which he wished to lead me, and in my mind I was arranging in a group the objections which thronged upon me. The German attack on Verdun had been foreseen. Falaise did not live shut up in his lonely Auteuil home. He was in charge of various charities, he saw people, he made inquiries. No doubt the evening before or the same morning he had got hold of a conviction that this attack

was about to be launched. What more natural than that, with this premonition, he should that day have been very specially anxious about his son? Imagine him in his drawing-room, at nightfall, when gloomy thoughts assail us, poking his fire. He is remembering the phantoms called up by the voice of Mervalle, the story of the Baronne de Boislève. He is bringing himself into one of those states of mind in which one credits the most fantastic adventures. The damp wood chars, groans, explodes. These explosions reinforce his anxiety. He sees in them a picture of the battle. Has he any need to exchange ideas with his wife? Have they not the same cares, the same dread? Suddenly, he is overwhelmed, for he has visualised his son's death. His wife understands at once what he is feeling; she feels it as he does. They share their visions. In all this there is nothing more than an expression of a father's and a mother's fears. And that first day at Verdun cost us so dear that the death of the young lieutenant in that very hour has nothing abnormal about it.

97. Thus did I hold out against my host's suggestions. There are almost always two explanations to human events. Did he guess at my resistance? He boldly transposed into the future the problem, of which he was awaiting the proof.

"My wife told you just now—we found out through the Spanish embassy that Georges had been identified, and the rough position of his grave. But we are hoping to get further and more definite details. One of his fellow-officers, Malais, a subaltern who was second-in-command in his battery, was wounded and taken prisoner. He has written and told his family that he saw our boy fall. We have got into touch with him and are awaiting his reply. Then we shall really know whether Georges was shot in the head at five in the evening, or whether he was killed by

a shell-burst at some other moment of the battle. If it was by a bullet, and at the hour of the enemy's attack, we shall have the proof that he did come to bid us farewell before he died.

114. You see I am reasoning quite calmly and arguing it out with myself. All the same, when the inexplicable imposes itself, we can but bow to it."

"There were so many killed at Verdun, my good friend, especially the first days. Think of all the parents who have been through the same ordeal."

But he kept pursuing his idea and nothing could turn him from it. —*The Phantom of the Rue Michel-Ange.*

24. *An Afternoon in the Country.*

Madame de La Vigneraie lay wearily back in a bamboo lounge chair, loaded with cushions which Hélène and Rose arranged behind their mother's shoulders. Hélène was fourteen and Rose fifteen and a half. Both red-haired, they were like each other : a rather dark skin, grey eyes, a laughing mouth, with an air of good health, good humour, and mischief. Helene had a dress of pink linen with white trimmings, and Rose a dress of white linen, trimmed with blue. Madame de La Vigneraie gazed tenderly at them as she drank her cup of coffee, in which she saw reflected as in a tiny mirror, round, limpid and clear-cut, her own thin and weary face. She put her cup back on the rush table on which there lay open, beside the tray, a box of those fat cigars beloved of Monsieur de La Vigneraie. The day was close. Madame de La Vigneraie breathed with difficulty.

16. "Perhaps we should have been better in the drawing-room."

"Yes . . . and I should have had to go and smoke all alone outside."

Smoke discommoded Madame de La Vigneraie except in the open air. That of the big cigar which M^{onsieur} de La Vigneraie had lit up rose in delicate bluish rings. M^{onsieur} de La Vigneraie shut down the box : the Cuban portrait of M^{onsieur} Alvarez, in his dress suit, closed down on the row of havanas, as if to sniff their scent.

In the meantime, Madame Dolonne was chatting with Madame de La Vigneraie, who was telling her about her health. Hélène and Rose remained silent, and Georges kept lighting his stumpy little cigarettes, whose honeyed, oriental smell the little girls inhaled with curiosity.

30. "Madame and Mademoiselle Hurtrot want to know if you are at home, madam." The footman awaited Madame de La Vigneraie's reply.

"No help for it, my dear. They must have taken the one o'clock train at Rivray. And there they are on our hands for the whole day ; bother those Hurtrots !"

"What a bore !"

"The more so as I'm deserting you like a coward. Madame d'Esclaragues has asked me to take her to La Monissière, which is up for sale. . . . Jules, tell them to harness the pony-carriage. . . . Fair lady, I carry you off."

41. Madame d'Esclaragues had not asked M^{onsieur} de La Vigneraie anything of the sort, but she was amused with the fiction. She would have to put up with the attentions of M^{onsieur} de La Vigneraie ; but this estate of La Monissière was said to be charming, and in any case a drive was better than enduring the dull Madame Hurtrot.

47. Madame and Mademoiselle Hurtrot appeared, perspiring and panting. They had walked from Vailly to Hautmont, out of meanness, counting that M^{onsieur} de La Vigneraie would have them driven back to the station on

their return. They were in full war-paint, Madame Hurtrot in puce taffeta, Mademoiselle Hurtrot in yellow muslin. Madame Hurtrot's swathes of grey hair were sticking to her forehead, and Mademoiselle Hurtrot's curls, gone out of curl, stood out in the oddest way. The mother's face was pinched and streaming with perspiration, the daughter's visage puffed out and shiny, and, what with the fixed pout of her mouth, she looked on the point of bursting into tears. Both were comical and pitiable, in their pretentious clothes which contrasted with their thick, dusty boots, for they had put on heavy footgear, looking forward to the way they would have to walk.

61. When she noticed Madame Dolonne and her son, Madame Hurtrot pressed her thin lips still more tightly together. Madame Dolonne gave a frigid bow. Georges lit a cigarette. Madame Hurtrot coughed as if to indicate that the smoke upset her. Monsieur de La Vigneraie continued without ceremony to draw great puffs from his big cigar. The conversation dragged awkwardly. After a few minutes, Monsieur de La Vigneraie got up.

"The pony-carriage must be ready, dear lady."

Madame d'Esclaragues got up likewise under the malignant eyes of Madame Hurtrot. . . .

72. Hélène and Rose remained on their chairs, one on each side of Mademoiselle Hurtrot. Madame d'Esclaragues went away with Monsieur de La Vigneraie. When they had got some distance off, Madame d'Esclaragues said to him :

"It's disgraceful to sneak away like this. Your daughters are bored to death. Do tell them to have a nice game of hide-and-seek with Georges and that wretched little Hurtrot girl."

Monsieur de La Vigneraie retraced his steps. At his proposal, the faces of Hélène, Rose, and Georges beamed.

Mademoiselle Hurtrot's pout changed into an anxious grimace. She looked at her mother to ask her what to do. Madame Hurtrot would have refused readily enough to let her daughter take part in a game made mildly improper by the presence of Georges Dolonne. But she respected the fortune of the "de La Vigneraies" too highly to dare to oppose them, especially at Hautmont, the substantial comfort of which impressed her.

89. Hélène and Rose de La Vigneraie had got up. The idea of a game of hide-and-seek gave animation to their young faces. For a last time Mademoiselle Hurtrot consulted her mother with a glance.

"If Madame de La Vigneraie sees nothing unsuitable in this rustic diversion, it is not for me to object to it."

"I certainly see nothing wrong in the children's enjoying themselves!" sharply replied Madame de La Vigneraie, replacing behind her back a cushion which her impatient start had allowed to slip away.

98. Madame Hurtrot's acidulated and vexed expression led Georges to forgive Madame de La Vigneraie for having included him among the "children," and he followed Hélène and Rose. They were showing the way to Mademoiselle Hurtrot, who was making her dress of yellow muslin billow out above her thick black leather shoes.

They went through the lobby, where Hélène and Rose took their soft straw garden hats. Georges picked up his boating straw.

The charm of Hautmont was, with its terrace, a great English garden admirably kept up. Beds of flowers adorned a wide lawn surrounded by clumps of trees. This garden was really a park with shady, twisting walks.

"That's the goal," said Hélène de La Vigneraie, pointing out a sun-dial. The bronze gnomon marked rather more than three o'clock on the stone face.

114. "And now we must see who it's to be," said Rose. "Monsieur Georges, will you count?"

Georges looked at Hélène and Rose: their young faces were made sharper by a mischievous smile. Georges smiled too. They had understood one another. He began to count:—

"*Am, stram, dram . . .*"

At each syllable, he pointed at one of the girls and himself; the one on whom the last syllable fell dropped out of the group. Hélène de La Vigneraie was out first, then Georges. There remained Rose de La Vigneraie and Marthe Hurtrot. Georges continued. The nonsense-syllables resounded. He took them more quickly and got them mixed up.

129. "It's you, Mademoiselle Hurtrot!"

He had cheated a little. Marthe Hurtrot had noticed it, but she did not protest: it was more proper to "seek" than to hide in the trees in the company of a young man. It was with these thoughts that she saw disappearing, round the bend of a path, the twin straw hats of the La Vigneraie girls and the boater of Georges Dolonne. She meant to surprise them stealthily in their hiding-place; so, after remaining the regulation five minutes by the sun-dial, she hitched up her muslin dress over her thick shoes and conscientiously began her round, resolved to act with prudence and guard the goal well.

141. Georges had stopped out of breath. Hélène and Rose caught him up. "Where shall we hide?" said Georges. "There are plenty of good places," said Rose. "There's the maze. There's the cedars, where we could climb into the branches. . . ."

Hélène broke in, "No, no, better than that . . . You know, Rose, the farm! Marthe's afraid of everything; she'll never dare go there, because of the dog and the cow

and the pigs." As she made for the farm, which was to the left of the park, Hélène said suddenly to Georges : " Ah, Monsieur Georges, we heard about the tale of Mademoiselle Duplan. How we did laugh ! Didn't we, Rose ? " " Oh, yes . . . "

157. This double confession broke the ice. They now felt they were chums. Therefore did Georges courteously aid the two little girls to climb up the ladder into the hay-loft. It was warm and half-dark there. The piled-up hay rose right up to the great beams of the roof, between which could be seen the wrong side of the tiles. The scent of the place was delicious, sharp and dusty, and slightly tickled the throat. Georges took off his hat. Rose unceremoniously picked it up and examined the bottom of the head-lining.

167. " Where does it come from ? Daddy gets his at Pinaud and Amour's." Georges' came from Liégault's. Georges explained to his friends that Liégault was in the Faubourg Saint-Honoré. They had come up close to him. Everything about Paris interested them, even the names of its streets. Monsieur de La Vigneraie had promised to take them there. " No doubt we shall go for mama's operation," said Hélène. Rose cut her short : " And we'll go to the theatre."

They were chatting like magpies on a haystack, both often talking at once, lying flat on their faces in the hay, their hats on the backs of their heads, with fresh lips and merry eyes. They had very long lashes which seemed to brush their cheeks.

182. " Monsieur Georges, have you still some of your cigarettes ? " He had, but it was hardly wise to smoke among all that hay : it would be better to go down and look for another hiding-place. " Pooh ! " said Rose, " daddy's insured ! " She lit her cigarette and passed the match to her sister.

"It's nice here," said Hélène. She was kneeling in the hay, her cigarette at one corner of her mouth; then she lay back and stirred no more. At times could be heard the yapping of a dog, the rope of the well, a lowing cow. Some pigeons were cooing, perched on the roof.

"When you think," said Hélène, getting up on one elbow, "that Marthe has been looking for us for nearly an hour!" And she imitated the whimpering pout of Mademoiselle Hurtrot.

197. Georges' cigarette-case was running out. The smokers deposited the little ends of charred cardboard in the young man's hat. He went to throw them out by the window of the loft from which one could see out into the farmyard. "Here's Mademoiselle Hurtrot!"

All three watched, exploding with suppressed laughter. Mademoiselle Hurtrot, having prospected to see that the yard contained neither dangerous dog nor raging bulls, was venturing in. She walked with caution. She turned aside to avoid the dung-hill. The cow-shed was empty; the cattle were in the fields. Mademoiselle Hurtrot advanced disgusted.

208. "Her grandmother looked after the geese at the Marquis de Montbléru's," said Hélène contemptuously to Georges. "She's afraid the poultry will recognise her!" In fact, Mademoiselle Hurtrot was driving off with sweeping gestures some chickens that were daring to peck round her. All the same, she made up her mind to go into the barn. At the bottom of the ladder to the loft, she coughed. "We're caught," groaned Rose. "No," whispered Hélène, very low, "let me manage."

217. Mademoiselle Hurtrot was hesitating. She set one foot on the first rung of the ladder, then she stopped. Rose and Hélène did not move. The perspiring and peevish face of Mademoiselle Hurtrot appeared above the trap-door.

Suddenly a magnificent grunting of pigs made itself heard. This was a talent peculiar to Mademoiselle Hélène de La Vigneraie, a talent which Mademoiselle Rose de La Vigneraie had likewise striven to acquire, and which enabled her to reply to her sister with a grunt no less life-like and no less natural. Georges nearly burst out laughing. The terrified head of Mademoiselle Hurtrot disappeared through the window, they saw the retreating damsel in the farmyard.

“Hélène, Hélène, come and let me kiss you : it’s priceless . . .”

Suddenly Rose leaped up, skipped in the hay, and cried :

“Supposing we went to the old summer-house ? . . . It really is too hot here after all.”

234. The summer-house was situated at one end of the garden. They crossed it with a thousand precautions so as not to be discovered by Mademoiselle Hurtrot. Through a clearing in the trees, they saw her standing on the lawn, not far from the sun-dial, on which it must now be about four o’clock, watching over the goal. George took pity on her.

“What about showing ourselves ?”

“No, no, Monsieur Georges . . . It just serves her right !” And they each took hold of him by the hand.

—*The Holidays of a Good Young Man.*

25. *The Return.*

My grandfather the joiner’s house was at the very heart of the oldest part of the town. Other houses hemmed it in ; its roof was lost among roofs of varying heights. The evening we arrived, as we left the little station, when our mother pointing to it told us : “There it is !” we at first saw nothing on the slope of the hill but a confused mass of

burnt-almond-coloured tiles above little rust- and honey-coloured walls. The square belfry of the church had its biggest bell visible to the whole heavens in a handsome circle of wrought iron, and all the house-chimneys rose up towards it, each topped by two bricks, slanting together and joining at the tips like the stiff fingers of saintly women at prayer in primitive statues and old-time pictures.

15. It was at the end of April ; and as there was a wind, it was still cold. Night fell while we were climbing up the rising road. By way of alleys turning under archways, by little squares in which rose plume-like a big elm or three acacias, we reached the lane on which our house opens. The wind, gaining strength, cut like a knife and tore at the lungs. Our corded portmanteaux and the big moleskin bag containing our food for the journey, all weighted down with glasses and bottles which clinked as they knocked against each other, cut into our fingers. And no one was expecting us but the house itself, got ready by a fifteen-year-old servant whom Guicharde had engaged by letters addressed to the town hall two weeks before.

29. We had to knock three times, and at last this girl made up her mind to open to us. She looked silly and good-natured, in a pink-striped bodice ; and some imitation green stones, set in copper, dangled at her ears. When she saw us, she stopped short with an idiotic laugh on the threshold, without even thinking of relieving us of our load. But already, in the other houses, curtains were being raised behind the greenish panes of the small windows. A door was half-opened. Someone bent down towards us from a balcony. A voice whispered :

“ Georges Landargues’ wife, with her two daughters.”

“ Come in,” said mama, “ come in at once.”

40. And she crossed the sill, with stiff, harsh movements, with a sort of courage born of desperation. But Guicharde

remained behind her on the threshold ; she stared at the windows behind which was stirring a sly, unfriendly curiosity, and I had the impression that her stern, bold glance made other glances turn aside, invisible behind the faded curtains. Then in her turn she came in, and the little maid shut the door. I said in a whisper :

“ We’re home.”

49. I looked at the passage, filled by the wooden staircase, the two doors, opening on the left into the sitting-room that was all smoky with a yellow-shaded lamp, on the right into the kitchen where some brushwood was blazing in a wide black fireplace. Guicharde was already turning up the wick of the lamp, opening the cupboards, wondering how our trunks, which were to be brought up the next day, would go up the staircase that was too narrow for them. Mother said nothing. It seemed to me that her head was hanging and her shoulders hunched together. She went to a window which no doubt gave on to the garden, and looked into the night. She was trembling somewhat. Perhaps she was thinking of those curtains lifted on her arrival, and perhaps the things which were being whispered even now in those dark houses reached her ears.

“ I shouldn’t have come back here,” she said.

63. “ But seeing it was impossible to do anything else,” pointed out Guicharde, with her rather rough and ready common-sense.

And she asked for a candle to go up into the bedrooms.

“ True enough ! ” sighed mama.

Resigned, she sat down at the table, laid ready for a meal. She had taken off her black coat trimmed with imitation astrakhan, but she kept on her little crepe hat, all bent and askew from the journey. I told her of it.

“ Take it off, mother. Anyone would say you’re not at home and are going to start off again.”

75. She obeyed at once, calm and gentle.

"It's true, all the same," she said, "that I am at home . . . Here I am back again, then, in my own house."

She showed me in a corner a straw-bottomed chair, very low, whose plain back had on it carved in relief three bees within a crown of olive.

"Look, that's where I used to sit when I was a tiny tot."

And again she showed me, near the window, a square table with twisted legs that shone in the lamplight.

"That's where I used to write my homework. I worked there for my primary school certificate. After that I mostly did accounts. It was my Uncle Jarny who taught me. He'd been a cashier at Paris in a big drapery house."

89. She was silent, looking at the window again; and what she now saw, well I knew it, lay beyond the furniture and the walls. Her sadness in this moment pierced me even to despair. Her poor heart was bleeding and weeping within my heart, and I gently passed my hand over the little hand that was so pale. But Guicharde came striding in. Speaking of the trunks, she declared:

"They'll pass all right, but we shall have to be careful not to chip the walls."

98. Behind her came Adélaïde, the maid, bringing the soup-tureen, and we sat down for the meal. We were not very hungry. The lamp kept on smoking and giving a bad light. Through the smell of its spluttering wick, the dead, damp smell of the old stones and the old plaster kept too long without sunlight became apparent to us. The great force of the wind, hugging the walls, threatened to make this poor abode crumble away. In its roar were rattling cords which seemed to fall back on our trembling hearts. At moments it seemed to die away. But out of these silences there came on us a greater dread, for we felt surely that it was still there, crouching over the house,

encircling it with its strength, to spring and whistle anew as soon as it had fully taken its terrible repose. Weariness was now weighing upon us so much that we could no longer speak. And yet we had to make the effort, for in the unbearable silence we were ready to burst into sobs.

116. "You'll see to-morrow," said mama; "it's a very fine view."

And again she said, all agitated by the disgrace she had found here once more, alive still after those thirty years, fearing for us among all troubles and hoping for us among all blessings, only the harm or the good that could come upon us through the formidable judgment of others:—

"From now on your life will have to be so steady and so quiet that no one can ever say anything about you. It's quite certain that nobody will ever think of marrying you. So there's no need for you to bother about young men. You won't have much pleasure, my poor girls; but if one day you can be respected as I should so much have wished to continue to be, you will be very fortunate all the same."

129. Thus she ceased not to instruct us, with all her words and through her own horrible example. And I clearly understood that this prudent moral plan which had governed all our lives from our childhood up, would in this narrow town press closer every day round my scruples and my obedience.

—*For Me Alone.*

26. *The Elm.*

For more than two hours the four men, down in the trench dug round the elm, a giant elm, had been hacking at the base with great blows of their axes. Almost all the roots were cut, but the tree still held out. At each attack the sap-wood spurted up fresh and hard.

"Ha ! . . . Ha !" panted their breasts in rhythm.

A spectator of this "chopping," the master stood a few steps further off. He seemed to be unwilling to come close to the edge. On his face, a twitch corresponded to the sound of the axes ; and from time to time he raised a vexed and unhappy glance to one of the windows of the hall, above him.

13. "It's a great pity," he muttered to himself, "a great pity."

"Fact is, with stout roots like this chap's got, you have to put twice as much force into it," remarked one of the men, bringing down his blow with the full swing of his arm.

. . . It was mid-November. It had been raining for a week ; this morning, all the leaves were dripping. The sunlight, with sparkles of frost in the mist, was silvering the woods ; and the grass was steaming all white, amid which the herds of cows were grazing.

One of the workmen, who was distinguished in the gang by his grey hairs, set down his axe, and the others stopped likewise. He touched the trunk and raised his eyes towards the tree-top.

26. "I say, Célestin," asked the master, "perhaps it's time to get the rope on ?"

Célestin replied, "I should think so," and slowly girded his loins with a thick rope lying on the ground.

The men had hoisted themselves out of the trench. All were red and perspiring, and they mopped their brows, for this soaking damp morning was hot and oppressive for men at work. And as Célestin leaned the ladder against the tree:—

"H'm . . . at your age I'd be in a bit of a funk, Célestin ! . . . I would indeed . . . So I'd rather tell you. Come on, now, let someone else do the job !"

"Someone else ! Not a bit of it, master ! I'm an old hand, you know !"

40. And Célestin climbed up the rungs, the highest of which reached that part of the tree where the trunk, not so large round, gave enough foot-hold for climbing.

"No good going against him," laughed one of his mates, "he's an old squirrel."

Célestin was climbing, the rope swaying beneath him. He had gripped both arms round the tree, with his head on one side, as though he were listening to the beating of the elm's heart. At each effort, he got half a foot or so higher. His loins moved with the supple motions of a lizard; the bark cracked beneath his bare toes; finally, his black and horny heel disappeared in the leafage, and those below could no longer follow him except by the slow unrolling of the cord along the trunk.

54. "Ahoy!" shouted someone, making his voice carry between his hands. "Ahoy! All right, Célestin?"

They listened; a song replied. The quavering voice uttered indistinct words, but they recognised a song of the countryside.

"There was a good old man,
And he kept two lambs,
And he kept two lambs . . ."

But often the rustling of the leaves carried away tune and words together.

"He's got a voice as clear as a nightingale!"

And they all began to laugh. Célestin had fastened the cord to the crest of the elm. He came down nimbly, slithering down the smooth parts of the main trunk as though down a greasy pole. On the ground he shook himself and rubbed his eyes, which up in the tree had got filled with bits from the ants' nests. His mates back in the trench chaffed him:—

“ No wonder, seeing how skinny he is ! ”

“ Oh ! ” replied Célestin, “ I’m like the goats, I am ; I’ve got my fat inside ! ”

74. “ But tell us now, Célestin, with a fine voice and legs like that, why the deuce you don’t get married ? ”

“ No, no, lads, that doesn’t bother me now ! ”

And all in chorus, while once again the axes sent the splinters flying, they raised the song :—

“ There was a good old man,
And he kept two lambs,
And he kept two lambs.
He didn’t keep a lot,
For he kept but three.”

“ Ha ! . . . Ha ! ”

Monsieur des Lourdines kept looking up to see if the tree was not beginning to stir ; and he shook his head with the air of a man who is undergoing a severe loss. “ What a pity it is ! ” he repeated, “ it was such a fine tree ! ”

89. . . . As they neared the end, the men were putting more force into the blows they aimed. The two safety roots had suffered the common lot, and all these amputated roots formed a stump divided into sections, the head of a monstrous club dipping into the muddy water that had drained down from the embankment. Now the bills were attacking the underside with that hollow sound made by a voice in an empty house. Birds led by chance to perch on it began their song and fled in terror.

“ What a murder ! what a crime ! ” kept murmuring Monsieur des Lourdines. This destruction roused a deep response in his being. To cut down a tree which he had been accustomed to see from his earliest childhood was, in very truth, to tear away part of his soul.

"There's something moving . . . it's shaking !" shouted Célestin. All threw down their axes and laid hold of the rope.

"We don't want it to catch us !"

"Come on, stick it ! it won't fall where it likes !"

107. "This way, down there !" pointed Monsieur des Lourdines as he ran, afraid that one of the branches would fall so as to damage the roof of the hall. The men, harnessed to the rope at a short distance from one another, getting a purchase in the holes in the grass, were hauling in unison.

"All together !" they shouted, "swing to it ! one ! two !" Their eight arms were one single bronzed limb, one thong of swelling veins and muscles. Then something unwonted came to pass within the elm. Then, its crest languidly swayed and seemed to change its position. A cracking sound began at the foot, hardly louder than the cracking of a fire of dry wood, recurred, but deeper, was multiplied, broke out into an ominous rending, filled the air like thunder ; and the tree silently described its immense right-angle.

123. The men took to their heels. With a dull thud which made the earth tremble, the whole of the vacant space was covered with a rain of branches broken as by a thunderbolt, of leaves torn off by a hurricane. For one moment the whole mass moved frantically, and little by little the great bulk entered into its rest. Monsieur des Lourdines was running round the edge.

Then, at one of the windows, appeared a white dressing-jacket, goffered at the collar and cuffs. A woman's broad face, topped by greying hair ; the arms moved, and all that meant to say : "I saw ! I was there ! I saw the tree come down ! Well, well, what a difference ! How much lighter it all is now !"

—*Monsieur des Lourdines.*

27. Gordon at Khartoum. .

I did not understand this phrase, and the conversation dropped once more. As he was asking me for news about Slatin Bey, the door was opened and an old woman burst in without ceremony, shouting :—

“ The turkeycock’s escaped again ; he’s been chasing the children ; he’ll kill all the farmyard, and he has given Abatch a nip to start with.”

“ Abatch,” the pasha told me, “ is my orderly, a one-time colonel I sacked, who used to steal his troop’s rations. . . . Let’s go down ; you can follow me. . . . He’s a terrible brute, worse than Mohammed.”

12. We went down echoing staircases into a fairly cool cloister where a fountain was dying away ; the flagstones were piled with scattered feathers and a few dead bodies of poultry. An enormous turkeycock, gobbling, was dashing hither and thither. The woman fled away. Gordon went up to the animal, seized it, put his arm round its head. A few minutes passed ; the turkey sank down asleep.

“ Take him in again,” said the pasha, “ there he is, bewitched for you.”

Forthwith some soldiers and some black piccaninnies came back into the court. The turkeycock was borne off to his cage. The old woman fell on her knees before the general.

23. “ Behold my agricultural diversions,” he said to me with a smile. “ And behold my reserve stores. The town is only eating what it can get now. When I have eaten my turkey, Khartoum will fall. A fine thing, war, as you see ! By good luck I’ve a few profiteers whose hiding-holes I’ve some suspicions of. You break into a cellar, you distribute the grain to the troops, you hang somebody responsible ; in that consist all justice and all politics.”

On this, he asked for an umbrella, which was brought him by Abatch, and invited me to follow him on to the terrace. A terrible blaze of light reigned out here ; the wall was battlemented, and a few guns were piled on it. A big tripod telescope looked out on to the southern horizon. Intermittent bursts of musketry were crackling far away. Gordon pointed the glass towards the west, and said to me :

38. " Your Arabs are between Omdurman and the river already. . . . By the way, didn't you have some sort of an ultimatum to give me ? "

" Yes," I told him ; " but everything that has been happening to me is so extraordinary that you haven't been good enough to listen to it so far. I have four days to stay away. If I don't come back on the fourth, that will be the final insult to the Prophet. They will attack."

" It's all one to me," he replied. " You aren't going to deprive me of your company so soon as all that. I haven't had a talk for a whole term, and I'm fond of jabbering French. Stay till the day after to-morrow, at any rate ; then we can consider. That white and green gown suits you. If only the boats could still pass, I'd send your picture to the *Herald*."

50. " And what about my guard," I said to him, " that's waiting for me at the outposts ? "

" I'll send to say they can go back where they like. But do stay, I beg you ; we'll have dinner together, and I will to show you my kingdom."

A corridor brought us to some immense halls in which numberless scribes were piling up papers. These people got up, their pens thrust into their greasy fez-caps, thoroughly dazed at seeing a dervish in conversation with the pasha. An old secretary with gold lace all over his black uniform offered Gordon some sheets to sign.

61. " In four days' time ! " said he with a shrug of the

shoulders. And he explained to me : " That man is a Bey, his name's Barzati, he has been scrawling bilingual documents since the days of Jacob Pasha. He will go on scrawling them for the Prophet, if Mohammed doesn't suppress the filling up of forms."

I saw another room in which the bandsmen, painted children, were polishing copper instruments and fanning themselves like women. Somewhere else, an electric telegraph was working beside a sleeping man. Elsewhere again, two negroes, stripped to the waist, were lashing one another with their whole force to harden their skins. When we came back to the room in which he had received me, I thought I could here a procession which was singing in the street. It came nearer ; I made out some yelping voices of women.

76. " They're asking for grain," said Gordon. " That gang appears under my window every day at the same hour. I must admit that I never hear anything but laments, and not a single insult for myself. You're more or less right ; this race often appears to advantage, but that is when it is in adversity. All the same, if I can realise the dignity of suffering, I know too that we are bidden to act and to strive in adversity."

" In the place of these people," I said, " you would mutiny."

* * * *

84. The distant steamers could no longer be heard. Would the hoped-for reinforcements suffice to make this unhappy man persist ? I went back to a Gordon full of business and cordiality. " Did you hear ? " he said to me ; " and do you still doubt Lord Wolseley ? "

For the moment I did not reply to him. We dined with the doctor who, having heard the sirens, talked now of nothing but making sorties and going to recapture El-

Obeid. I noticed a certain roast dish that was served to us. "Isn't it the turkeycock?" I inquired.

95. "That's him," said the general, "There's nothing more after him, but we shan't need our stores any more. Two days from now, either I shall no longer be eating, or I shall be eating my joint with pickles up from Cairo."

When we were alone, I said to him, "Do you really think you are saved?"

"No such thing," he replied. "But I do think that this is the end. My fellahin have no more balls; they're dying of hunger in the arsenal. The forts aren't holding out; the town is flooded with spies."

"Surely," I told him.

"You know it?"

"I think I can guess it."

"In short, at the slightest assault we are taken, unless I am relieved. In either case I shall have acted as honour demands, and honour for once will have agreed with necessity."

"No," said I to him. "There is still time to compromise. Let us treat with the Prophet."

114. He pushed back his chair with a jerk and gazed haughtily at me.

"Sir," he said, "I will not insult you by supposing that you take your part seriously. Never say those words again, and I excuse you for having spoken thus to me. I take you for what you are, not for a spy, but for a man of intelligence minus will-power. I am in charge of souls, sir, which you are not. The mob of this town—I'm speaking of the half, the third, the quarter, which is not false to me, would have fled to the north but for my presence, and would have escaped famine, perhaps slaughter. They remained out of confidence in me; and is it to-day, after a blockade of three hundred days, that I am to betray their cause?"

" Their cause is their interest ; and their interest is not to get captured and massacred."

129. " Excuse me, sir, that is *my* interest, so why should it not be theirs ? I am not holding out here to obey Mr. Baring, nor yet after all to save fifteen thousand verminous Arabs and niggers ; I'm doing it for my honour, as I told you, that is, for my conscience. Here, sir, is a unique occasion for dying a good death ; a Christian will not let it pass by."

" Still those ideas ! " said I to him in irritation. " It is with them that one makes martyrs of men. Are you quite sure you are not making a mistake ? The least error, and you will die in vain. . . ."

" I am sure of my salvation," said the general, " and you have not even an idea of yours. If danger comes to us in common, our attitude will judge between us. . . . But no, live, sir, go back to your prophet or go to the devil, and have never a regret."

" I am not leaving you," I said to him, " possibly I shall be the one to save you."

" Salvation is not the same thing for us two ; and if you insist on staying, I am persuaded that it will be I who will save you. Besides, I shouldn't like to see you die in that uniform."

" You call me a renegade, but you know well I have denied nothing."

151. " Worse still, sir, worse still, to be a renegade is after all to have some belief, or to have had one. . . ."

Thereupon he unceremoniously took off his boots in front of me, went on to the terrace, and I heard him whistling in snatches. Explosions were still re-echoing. I dared not follow him. Night came on. He came back to me without addressing a word to me and called up in the corridor a platoon of negroes whom he inspected in person. Then he

put his Bible under his arm and paced up and down without reading it. In the end he said to me : " Go and sleep, Sir Hostage ; you will start off to-morrow, at daybreak if you like."

162. Then, as Abatch appeared, he made him lie down at his door, forbidding him to light a cigarette. The night would not let me sleep. I began violently to regret that I had consented to pass it remaining there. I heard the pasha, who ceased not to pace the flags, and the murmur of his voice made me realise that he was praying in solitude. Outside I saw the sky reddened by fresh burnings of the scrub. In the square before the palace, arms were sounding and hasty footsteps passing.

171. In the end, I had almost fallen asleep on my truckle bed, when the roof crumbled away with a frightful roar and allowed the dawning day to enter. White smoke spread around. The limestone ran like sand. I understood that a shell had chipped the terrace near me. Cries arose on all sides. I hastened along the stairways. The palace seemed already deserted. At last I recognised the door of the telegraph-room ; there stood Gordon, pale, his Bible under his arm. A line of trembling soldiers stretched in echelon from this square to the steps of the palace, and seemed to be passing on news.

182. As I was going by, the general said to me : " You can't go now. Your people have begun the attack ; but go into the town, it doesn't matter where ; it will be safer than here."

" Look at my clothes," I said to him, pointing to my Mahdist gown and my green girdle.

" Cheer up," he said ironically. " You're in the colours of the victor. Off you go. You run no risk in the streets."

I went down. Someone ran after me ; it was himself. We reached the steps together. The sky was still rosy. The

great mast bore a drooping flag. Scattered shots could be heard. Above the roofs a slender minaret, grazed by a bomb, crumbled like a cut candle.

197. "I have spoken to you harshly, sir," said Gordon to me. "Forgive me, I beg of you, and remember . . ." He broke off. Some fugitives were arriving, bare-headed, and squatted down near the watch-tower. He addressed them in a string of Arabic imprecations whose brutality I could not even suggest to you. "We are lost," they replied, "we are lost." And they lay down on one side, for the paved court was still in the shade. He threatened them with his revolver. They refused to budge.

The pasha gave a forced laugh and said to me : "There you are ; you'll be able to say elsewhere that I could do nothing against that ! Goodbye, and forgive me once more. I don't think we shall see each other again. The facts show you are right ; but they are no more than facts. Goodbye ; remember me." He gave me a military salute, and our hands met. I felt that he was gripping mine hard as though he would have embraced me.

216. "Come away," I said to him, "I implore you."

"No, sir, if God wills ! Once again, remember."

And I saw him no more. I slipped through the deserted streets, in which the firing seemed to get nearer. Those walls of sun-dried bricks offered no great shelter. Here and there wisps of smoke were still trailing. I saw corpses stretched out in the gutter. Without realising it, I was making towards the Blue Nile ; in that costume it was, in spite of all, better not to meet the regular soldiers.

225. Suddenly I saw I was near the Nile. Except for a few stranded barges, there were no signs of the struggle there. But from the direction of the hospital came a terrible shriek. I shuddered and retraced my steps, seeking a corner in which I might await in hiding the outcome of the

adventure. The doors around me were barricaded. What a fool I was in truth to be abroad ! I was almost running now, bearing with me a horror greater than my fatigue and an obstinate desire to escape. At last an open house, a staircase up which I went, a modest terrace on to which I furtively slipped. . . .

235. From there, without having foreseen it, I overlooked the palace square, where at first I saw nothing but the bodies of men cut down. A man was climbing up the mast, on which the Egyptian colours were still flying. But beyond, from the lofty flight of steps of which I got a side view, a white-clad group was advancing with pikes. Before it I saw Gordon and his little negro. The child was seized, whisked round like a sling, and dashed against the stairs. The general did not stir. In uniform, helmeted as I had seen him, but with no visible arms, he was still flicking his boots with a cane. A man dashed against him ; I did not see him strike, but the general fell. Cries were exchanged, and the group came back in my direction, carrying in a fold of linen a red thing which was a severed head.

248. I shut my eyes as I threw myself flat on the ground ; I but saw all the better the face of Gordon smiling, with his blue eyes and his honest mouth, already in the background of my memories ; and in the unbelievable quiet of this captured town I heard his voice telling me : " I am sure of my salvation, and you have not even an idea of yours. . . ."

At this moment the firing began again, as copious as the great rains, but I heard nothing whistling by. I understood that all was over : the victors were using up the cartridges in the air as a sign of rejoicing. A distant sound of falling buildings came to me yet once more, and that was all.

—*Monsieur Renan's Journey.*

28. *The Fishery.*

That year they were fishing the pond of Les Moulinettes. The lease of that piece of land required that the sheet of water should be drained off once in three years and that the fish should be sold, partly for the owner's benefit, partly for that of the farmer, with the exception of six carp justly due and chosen among the biggest, as was but fair.

From Shove-Monday, then, the sluices had been opened. The water poured out under a raised causeway through a brick-work drain, then it went further by way of a little brook and spread over the meadows below.

10. On the Monday evening the level of the water had still sunk only a little, but on the Tuesday morning a border of mud began to appear, and the fish inhabiting the edges began to move about and lash the water with frenzied movements of their tails. Finally, on the Wednesday, came the fishing.

From the very peep of dawn a tavern-keeper from St.-Ambroise came and took up his stand at Les Moulinettes. After him soon came the youngsters of the neighbourhood ; at first there were to be seen two, then two more, then ten : soon there were some thirty of them, boys and girls, rigged up all anyhow.

21. The fish began to come out. They kept coming into the " frying-pan," a small and shallow reservoir, blocked at one end by a fairly close-meshed grating. The first to come were the blay ; they appeared in big and hurrying shoals ; and then, once they were in the already turbid water of the reservoir, they seemed to realise that they had taken the wrong turning and tried to get back through the pipe. But the current was too strong and bore them back, and they began to dash frantically round and round. After

them came the roach, and then the bream. The reservoir was a marvel of life and agitation. Innumerable little brown streaks glided over the surface of the water ; from time to time a big bream rose from the bottom and turned over with a sudden effort, broad and shining as a tin platter.

35. At nine o'clock the fishing began. Gédéon, and Alexis, the new farm hand, had each a big net ; standing on the edge of the reservoir, they kept unceasingly plunging it in. Behind them a man took the fish and carried them into the holes filled with water which had been got ready to take them.

The fishing had never been so good ; Michel himself was amazed at it. No doubt it was due to the fact that they had been able to capture all the pike at the preceding fishing. The youngsters kept shouting, as they leaned over the grating of the reservoir :—

45. “ They're getting through ! There's some little'uns getting away ! ” or else : “ Hi, guv'nor ! don't you see ? two have just jumped out of the net . . . And there's a dead'un floating on the water. . . . ”

As a fine bream eluded Gédéon and fell back on the side of the grating, a fat and red-faced imp of about ten suddenly made up his mind, saying :

“ Wait a bit ! I'll show them ! ”

Observing a basket, he turned up trouser-legs and shirt-sleeves and leapt into the stream. At his first attempt he brought up the bream and five or six small blay. “ He's got some gumption, that young shaver,” said Michel ; “ here, catch ! ”

58. He emptied over the grating the contents of a net, a dozen blay who fell into the water like the sparks of fireworks. Then another youngster took a hand, then another, then all or nearly all. From time to time, Michel threw them some fish and they paddled about with loud shouts, encum-

bered by their baskets, fighting to get the best places. A little boy, squeezed out by the others, was chattering with cold, in the water up to his middle ; he was going to give up and come out, when he picked up a splendid bream. Jumping on to the meadow, he began to throw it on the grass.

“ Where'll you put it ? ” said Michel.

“ Inside my shirt. I've got some others : look ! ”

He opened his shirt and showed two blay and three or four heads of roach he had pulled through the grating. He added as he slipped the bream on to his stomach, “ It's like a pancake . . . not a hot one, though ! ”

75. On the causeway over the pond a woman called “ Fédéri ! ” The infant gasped for breath. “ Damn ! . . . it's our ma ! ! ” The mothers were indeed arriving, bringing pieces of bread and butter, clean pinafores, ties, for the youngsters had dashed off in a great hurry without taking the time to eat or to make themselves look decent. When they saw what was on, they sang out for all they were worth. But it was in vain ; the youngsters, so overflowing was their joy, did not listen to the music : they stood fast, resolved to know nothing about it, and resigned to thumps.

87. About eleven o'clock, the real visitors appeared. The first was a stout red-faced man whose coming caused no surprise. He was known as “ the otter.” He followed up all the fishings of the ponds, walking twelve miles for the sake of eating fresh fish. And he did indeed eat it ! His gluttony was miraculous, and the country folks were proud of it. He would remain at the table six hours on end, without speaking, without turning his head, without moving even the tips of his toes, eating, eating, eating.

97. Many had the curiosity to go to some expense in order to sit opposite him and watch him struggle. Ordinary gluttons relieved one another in vain, when there was

fish to be eaten ; he would tire out four and five teams. He immediately came up to the reservoir and inquired :

“ The tench haven’t come out yet ? ”

“ No,” said Michel, “ but here are the first just coming.”

From the bottom of his heart he said : “ Ah ! so much the better ! ”

Then, without more delay, he went off to bear the glad tidings to the inn-keeper. “ There are some tench, you know. . . . Better go and look.” The other was more than willing. “ I’ll go at once . . . but first of all I want to pick you a good place. . . . Here, sit here, in the middle of the table, that’s the place where the dish goes. And now listen to me : you know how to eat, you do. . . . that bucks up the others. I’ll serve you . . . as between friends, savvy ? I won’t charge you anything . . . Only do eat, eat well ! ”

118. “ I’ll do my best,” he replied with sincerity. Hardly had he taken a seat than three villagers of St.-Ambroise took their places opposite him and ordered some fried fish.

On the causeway, the ranks of the onlookers were getting thicker. All the young folks of the countryside were there. It was like the first meet of the year. Shopkeepers had come and bought up all the small fish, and the farm women had been obliged to hurry up if they also meant to have some young fry cheap.

127. Michel was the only one to sell ; he did not weigh, but made do by guessing with a glance. The women crowded round him with all kinds of tricks to get in before their turn. An old woman, the last to come, had at once worked her way to the front row ; and, as Michel had just picked up a lot containing some fine specimens, she shoved aside the baskets of the others and pushed forward her own with the lid raised.

“ Here . . . put it here, dearie ! ”

Above, on the causeway, the younger people began to laugh and to repeat : " Dearie, dearie ! Put it here, dearie ! " Michel lifted his head : just above him was a group of girls, and one of them, a tall one and very pretty, showing a row of white teeth, looked him boldly in the face. " Dearie, dearie ! " He was annoyed at being badly dressed. . .

143. The pond was about to be completely drained. It was now a great black basin, fifteen acres of mud through which now there only wound a stream of muddy water. The big fish were coming out, enormous carp that had to be captured one by one. The two labourers had got down into the reservoir and were splashing about in it, covered with mud up to the hair, but nevertheless enjoying this extraordinary kind of work. The eels appeared one by one in the entrance of the drain ; but they immediately dashed off into the mud, and catch them if you can ! Besides, the big ones remained on the bed of the pond ; monsters could be seen stretched out more or less everywhere ; there must have been among them some very old ones that it had never proved possible to drive out.

156. The lookers-on pointed one out, not very far off ; and a young fellow said : " I wouldn't mind fetching it ! " As they dared him to do it, he bet them he would. " It's yours for the taking," said Michel ; " I'll make you a present of it and a bob with it."

So he undressed, put on an old pair of trousers, and pressed forward into the mud. He quickly had it up to his waist ; and as he persisted, urged on by the laughter, he fell flat, unable to get up again. The girls called out at him : " Turn to the right ! . . . to the left ! . . . He's caught like a fly in cream." They had to throw him a rope and drag him across the mud like the trunk of a tree. He went down into the meadow to wash in the brook, and the young people escorted him.

171. "A picture-man!" This cry immediately brought them all back. A gentleman had just arrived on a bicycle with a lady in a hat, and was setting up a camera in the meadow. He took the distance for a moment under his black curtain and then signed that he was going to speak, and everyone was silent.

"If you want to be taken. . . ."

"Yes, yes, we do!"

"Well, then, you must place yourselves a bit. Some up above on the causeway, the others in the field behind the fishers."

They all grouped themselves, stamping with impatience; and then they kept still. But it was not satisfactory so; the gentleman came and placed them himself.

185. "Here, you . . . you more in front, sonny . . . and don't move!"

They were packed too tightly against one another, and with waves of his hand the gentleman thinned out the groups, with quick movements as though he had been sorting apples.

"We aren't going to be in it, we aren't," said Michel.

"Oh, yes, you are, old man, and just as you are too; I'll send you a proof or two."

"All the same, it makes me feel awkward-like; we're very dirty to be the first in the front of all these fine folks."

196. He turned round to see those who were behind him. There were about a hundred of them, making themselves quite tired with standing straight up and looking beautiful. The mothers, with heads erect, were seeking with their eyes their youngsters placed in front. The lads were arm in arm with the girls. The gentleman had paired them off to suit himself, according to their costumes or their height, and the young fellows were not with their sweethearts; but no one dared to move for fear of spoiling the whole thing.

"Ready ! " shouted the photographer, " are you ready ? " The photographer raised his hand. " Now . . . I'll count . . . one ! " Michel only had the time to turn his head. . . . " two ! . . . three ! I thank you ! "

The noise of coughing arose, and laughter and shouts ; the youngsters began to gambol about.

—*Néne.*

29. Shelley at Eton.

In 1809, King George III. set at the head of the aristocratic Eton College Doctor Keate, a terrible little man, who regarded thrashings as an unavoidable stage on the road towards all moral perfection, and who concluded his sermons with the words, " Boys, be charitable, or I'll thrash you till you are." The gentlemen and rich merchants whose sons he educated beheld this pious ferocity without displeasure, and regarded with singular esteem a man who had birched nearly all the prime ministers, bishops, and generals of the country.

12. At this period, every kind of severe discipline was approved by the select few : the French Revolution had just demonstrated the dangers of liberalism when it affects the governing classes. Official England supposed itself to be fighting in Napoleon philosophy on the throne. It exacted from its public schools a generation sagely hypocritical.

To tame the possible ardour of the youthful aristocrats of Eton, a far-sighted frivolity organised their studies. After five years at school, a boy had read Homer twice, nearly all Virgil, an expurgated Horace, and could compose passable Latin epigrams on Wellington or Nelson. A taste

for quotations was in those days so thoroughly developed among the young men of this class that Pitt, in Parliament, having stopped short in the middle of a line of the Aeneid, the whole House, Whigs and Tories alike, rose up and finished the line. A fine example of homogeneous culture.

Science was optional, and hence neglected; dancing compulsory. As for religion, Keate considered it criminal to doubt it, superfluous to speak of it. The worthy doctor dreaded mysticism much more than indifference. He allowed laughter in chapel and did not have the Sabbath day's repose any too well observed. It is not unnecessary to say here, to explain the perhaps unconscious machiavellianism of this educationist, that he did not object to being lied to a little. "A sign of respect," said he.

36. Rather barbarous customs regulated the relations of the boys amongst themselves. The small ones were the fags or slaves of the big ones. Each fag made his sovereign's bed, brought him up water from the pump in the morning, brushed his clothes and his shoes. All disobedience was punished by appropriate tortures. A child wrote to his parents, not to complain, but to describe his day: "Rolls, whose fag I am, had put on some spurs and tried to make me jump a ditch that was too wide. Every time I shied at it, I had a taste of the spur. Of course I've got a bleeding thigh, my "Greek Poets" are in mincemeat, and my new suit all torn."

47. Boxing was held in high esteem. One fight was so strenuous that a boy was left dead on the boards. Keate came to see the corpse and said: "This is regrettable, but above all things I insist that an Eton boy must be able to give a blow for a blow."

The fundamental and secret aim of the system was to form strong characters run off in a single mould. Independence in action was great, but originality in thoughts,

clothes, or speech the most hated of crimes. A moderately keen interest in lessons or ideas was regarded as unbearable affectation that it was important to correct by force.

58. Such as it was, this life was far from unpleasant to the greater number of the youth of England. The honour of sharing in the maintenance of the traditions of so ancient a school, founded by a King and in all ages the neighbour and the nursling of kings, paid them well for their sufferings. A few sensitive souls alone suffered long. For instance, young Percy Bysshe Shelley, son of a very rich landed proprietor of Sussex, and grandson of Sir Bysshe Shelley, Bart., seemed unable to get acclimatised. This extremely beautiful child, with bright blue eyes, curling fair hair, a delicate complexion, showed a moral restlessness truly extraordinary in a man of his rank, and an incredible tendency to call into question the Rules of the Game.

71. At the moment of his arrival at the school, the captains of the Sixth, seeing his frail body, angelic face, and girlish movements, had imagined a timid character which would require little attention from their authority. They soon discovered that any threat immediately drove young Shelley to passionate resistance. An unbreakable will, in a body too weak to back up that will's decrees, predestined him to revolt. His eyes, dreamily soft in a state of repose, took on under the influence of enthusiasm or indignation an almost savage light. The voice, usually soft and serious, became on such occasions shrill and agonised.

82. His love of books, his contempt of games, his long hair, his shirt opening on to a womanish neck, everything in him shocked the censors charged with maintaining in this little world the elegant brutality of which it was proud. Having decided, from his first day at Eton, that the tyranny

over the fags was contrary to the dignity of man, he had abruptly refused to serve, which had put him without the law.

He was called "mad Shelley." The most robust of the inquisitors undertook his salvation by way of torture, but gave up attacking him in single combat, on finding him capable of the worst. He would fight like a girl, with hands unclenched, slapping and scratching.

94. Shelley-hunting, with an organised pack, became one of the chief sports of Eton. A few hunters would discover this strange creature reading a poet by the river bank, and forthwith would give tongue. With floating hair, through the meadows, the streets of the town, the college cloisters, Shelley would take flight. At last, hemmed in against a wall, pressed on like a boar at bay, he would utter a piercing shriek. Throwing at him balls soaked in mud, the nation of schoolboys would fix him to the wall.

102. A voice shouted: "Shelley!" "Shelley!" took up another voice. All the echoes of the old grey walls sent back cries of "Shelley!" howled in a shrill key. A toadying fag would pull at the victim's clothes, another pinched him, a third came noiselessly up and with a kick sent flying into the mud the book that Shelley was hugging frantically under his arm. Then the fingers of all would point towards the victim, and a renewed shout of "Shelley! Shelley! Shelley!" finally shook his nerves. The wild fit awaited by the tormentors burst forth at last, a fit of mad fury which made the child's eyes glitter, his cheeks go white, and all his limbs tremble.

114. Tired by this monotonous spectacle, the school would return to its games. Shelley would pick up his mud-stained books, and alone and deep in thought, would slowly make his way towards the lovely meadows that border the Thames. Sitting on the sunny grass, he watched

the river gliding by. Running water, like music, has the gentle power of changing sadness into melancholy. Both, through the continuous flow of their fluid elements, gently breathe into men's souls the certainty of oblivion.

The massy towers of Windsor and Eton built up round the rebellious child an immovable and hostile world, but the trembling reflection of the willows gave him peace by its very fragility. . . .

125. Shelley would close his book, stretch out in the sun amid the flowers, and meditate on the wretchedness of men. From the mediaeval buildings of the neighbouring school, the confused murmur of the voices of folly rose into this charming scene of woods and streams. Around him, in the peaceful countryside, no mocking visage observed him. At last the child gave vent to his tears, and clasping violently his linked hands, swore aloud this extraordinary oath : " I swear to be good, just, and free, as far as it is in my power. I swear never to make myself the accomplice, even through my silence, of the selfish and the powerful. I swear to consecrate my life to beauty. . . . "

If Dr. Keate could have witnessed a fit of religious enthusiasm so regrettable in a well-conducted establishment, he would certainly have treated the case according to his favourite method.

—*Ariel*.

30. *Cosmogonies of the Ancients.*

In the beginning men, like children, extended their own feelings to everything endowed with movement, to animals in particular. And as they knew no laws of natural physics, they attributed to invisible beings, capable of willing and of reasoning, every phenomenon of which they felt that they themselves were not the cause.

Thus among the ancient peoples, the Egyptians, the Chaldeans, the Greeks, everything in nature was animate, if not deified ; the heavens and the stars, it was thought, were made to move by gods who nevertheless were subject to a sort of supreme destiny against which they dared not rebel.

12. As for the means by which these star-gods made their movements, it was always the one most highly thought of in the country in question : a boat in Egypt, a chariot in Chaldea, both together in Greece.

The earth, surrounded on all sides by a mysterious sea, by a river which separates the domain of mankind from that reserved for the gods, is conceived of as a long flat elongated surface by the Egyptians, as a flat and round one by the Greeks, whereas, for the Chaldeans, it rises constantly from the edges to the centre, which thus forms a mountain in which rises the Euphrates.

22. On the inaccessible shores of the world, or on great columns which cannot be approached, rests the dome of heaven, always regarded as being of metal, which reflects the sunlight during the day, and at night is lit up by innumerable stars. Over every star is set a god, who, thought the Egyptians, must remain for ever at his post, without being allowed ever to leave it, and without other powers than that of fulfilling at the appointed hour the function with which he is entrusted.

As for the common support of the earth and the sky, when it is mentioned, it is the eternal waters (among the Chaldeans).

As soon as the question arises of explaining the movements of the stars, more diversity is found.

34. The sky of the Chaldeans, of indefinite thickness, was supposed to be hollowed out of a great circular cavern, which communicated with the interior by two gates,

situated one in the east and the other in the west. The Sun, on a car drawn by wild asses, entered every morning by the eastern gate, mounted towards the zenith, then descended towards the western gate, by which he entered the cavern which brought him back by the following day to the eastern gate : the blazing disc seen from here below by mortals was one of the wheels of the car.

43. For the Egyptians, the Sun was borne on a boat which floated on a celestial river ; and he became invisible at night because he was on that part of the river concealed by the mountains of the north. In the daytime, he went up in a slanting direction from the east towards the south, then came down again from the south towards the sunset, but remaining lower down in the winter and going up higher in the summer, which fact was explained by a comparison drawn from the Nile. The Boat of the Sun, it was said, had always to hug on the River of Heaven that one of the banks which is nearer to men ; now, at the moment when this river overflowed, swollen like the Nile by the annual rise, the boat left the main river-bed and came closer to Egypt ; then, at the falling of the waters, the boat went back with them.

56. Among the Greeks, no trustworthy document allows us to go farther back than the period of Homer, who sets between the earth and the vault of heaven the kingdom of the air, with the clouds, and above that the *aether*, which borders on the vault. Jupiter and the gods traverse at will the sky, that is, the upper regions of the ether ; there it is that, below the solid vault, the stars move. Aurora, preceded by the morning star, is followed by the Sun, who, every morning, emerges in the east from the River of Ocean, reaches the midst of the sky in the middle of the day, then descends towards the west, where he plunges into the Ocean below the earth. What becomes of him during

the night? Neither Homer nor Hesiod say anything on this subject, but Aeschylus completes them: every night he sails from the west to the east in a golden cup, along the River of Ocean.

70. The primitive Egyptians had observed the eclipses of the sun, and attributed them to a dragon. The solar bark, borne along by a never-changing current, glided peacefully over the River of Heaven. At times, however, Apôpi, a monstrous serpent, resembling those which still lurk in the Nile, came up from the depths of the waters and rose up in the path of Râ, the incarnate god of the sun; the crew then flew to arms and began the struggle. So long as the fight continued, mankind saw Râ growing weaker, and the sun disappearing; therefore, though far away, they sought to aid him, and to this end, as savage tribes do still, they would shout, gesticulate, strike vigorously anything that could emit a loud noise, in order to terrify the monster. After some time, the Sun would win the day and resume his journey, whilst Apôpi sank back into the abyss.

85. The movements of the moon, the planets, and the stars were explained in each area more or less in the same way as the movements of the sun. Furthermore, the Egyptians had endeavoured to explain the phases of the eclipses of the moon.

The Moon, the left eye of the god Horus, borne in a boat, floated on the same river as the Sun and passed through the same gates which he traversed morning and evening. She too had her foes, who unceasingly lay in wait for her: the crocodile, the hippopotamus, and the sow. It was especially when she was full, towards the fifteenth of each of the Egyptian months, that she ran the greatest risks. The sow, dashing upon her, cast her into the river, in which she was gradually extinguished, and lost for a few days; but her twin brother, the Sun, set out in

search of her and brought her back to Horus. Thus were explained her phases, and each of these crises measured a month for the inhabitants of the earth.

101. At times, the accident was more serious still. The sow, taking advantage of the inattention of her keepers, greedily swallowed the Moon, which disappeared abruptly instead of growing fainter by degrees. These eclipses, which terrified men at least as much as those of the sun, never lasted very long, for the gods forced the monster to vomit the eye of Horus before she had digested it.

Among the Chaldeans, but at a far less remote period, we find a scientific explanation of these same phases. They considered the moon as a rounded disc, flat and thin, which appeared to the earth now in section (new moon), now full-face (full moon), and by degrees in the intermediate positions.

114. To what epoch must we assign the primitive ideas of the cosmos which we have just indicated? How were they transformed later on? We can only reply to these questions so far as they concern the Greeks, among whom these ideas were modified and took on a more scientific turn with the first school of philosophy, the Ionian, in which we find the idea of a natural and universal explanation replacing fragmentary and supernatural explanations.

—*Astronomy.*

31. *The King.*

Everything pointed to a dark and quiet night. The curfew rang. The lights were put out in the neighbouring windows. A dog barked. Madame Dalanzières had already her head on her pillow. Her husband, with a slipper in one hand, was listening to an unaccustomed

sound of footsteps in the street and on the square, for the house formed a corner of both. He heard running and talking. A knocker resounded noisily on a door. The knockings grew frantic : someone was knocking up Monsieur Landrageot, the alderman. The voices became louder. Windows were once more lighted up. Evidently something extraordinary was going on. The noise got louder still.

13. Monsieur Dalanzières went to the window. Near the bridge there was a group of men with lanterns. They were gesticulating. At the end of the street a galloping rider was shouting something indistinct. The man was on a horse and waving a torch. Under the window he raised his head ; his mouth opened.

At his shout : " The King ! The King ! " the closed shutters and windows opened. From them leaned the faces of men in nightcaps and of women in caps. Sleepers, still rubbing their eyes, appeared on the thresholds of their doors. Vircourt was waking up, stupefied and dazed. Bare feet were hastening into slippers and legs into stockings. The relit candles gave a wavering light. Madame Dalanzières, standing on her bed, was trampling on the pillows and dancing for joy as she shouted : " The King's coming, the King's coming ! "

28. Vircourt has three belfries which contain seven bells, including a big bell. The little ones began to ring. A preliminary one tinkled at St. Etienne's, those of Ste. Nicole's joined it. They could be heard answering one another. Simon signed to Madame Dalanzières to listen. A trot of horses beat on the cobbled street. Madame Dalanzières darted to the window. The trot came nearer.

It was some liveried runners and pages of the Grand and the Petty Stables. In their hands they held lighted torches. They posted themselves in rows along the whole length of the High Street, on the square, and at the approach to the

bridge. Several, dismounting from their horses, climbed on to the stone posts. The red plumes of their hats seemed all ablaze in the light ; it was as light as at midday.

42. Madame Dalanzières pulled aside the shutter to get a better view. A compact crowd was collecting along the houses. The square was swarming, although many people had betaken themselves to the suburb of the town. The wind was scattering sparks from the torches. Suddenly, at the end of the street, and nearly stretching right across it, the Lifeguards debouched.

The silver braid glittered on their blue coats. They passed, upright in their saddles, gloved hands on their reins, their horses champing the bit. The long tails were lashing the hairy sides. Next the tunics of the Light Horse empurpled the causeway. They advanced with a great clanking of metal. The bells redoubled their efforts ; those from St. Lambert's belfry had joined the chorus. When the Red Guards had filed past, there came an empty space and a silence.

57. Soon, with a distant clamour, growing as it came nearer and nearer, was mingled the big bell of St. Lambert's. It was rung only on great festivals. Its broad, deep swinging filled the air. Madame Dalanzières could bear it no longer ; she thrust back the shutter, and came out on to the balcony. The torches were being waved to brighten up their resin, and it was in a reddish glare that there finally appeared the heads of horses, six of them harnessed two by two to a great state-coach whose gilded dome rose high above them. They were harnessed in red leather with golden studs, the cruppers adorned with flame-coloured ribbons. The coachman who was driving them, perched high on his box, reached the level of the windows with his head. He was huge and corpulent. The coach, borne up on its broad wheels, appeared as an edifice of magnificent

carving and transparent windows. It arrived exactly below the balcony. Madame Dalanzières, clapping her hands, leaned so far over that her husband held on to her by her night dress.

73. Of the three great lords sitting on the crimson cushions, there was one, at the back, who wore a coat of cloth of gold over a red tunic. A muslin stock encircled his neck. His hat, with several rows of plumes, covered an ample black periwig falling over the shoulder, on which was knotted a bow of scarlet ribbons. His strong, ruddy face showed outlined against the light the pout of a full lower lip and the curve of a powerful nose. A great air of pride and majesty completed the figure. The smoke of the torches arose like incense. The big bell filled the heavens with its brazen clamour. Simon felt stirred to the depths of his being.

85. Madame Dalanzières was gloating with joy. Without fearing to be recognised or thinking of wrapping herself up, she was leaning halfway over the balcony. The shout of "God save the King" which she uttered was so loud and joyous that the King raised his eyes to the balcony whence it came, and smiled at this handsome woman, so plump and fresh-looking. He pointed her out with a finger to the two noblemen sitting opposite him.

The coach continued its progress. The King's profile disappeared at the turn of the road. Madame Dalanzières could still see the beribboned shoulder over which rolled the curls of the wig. The big bell of St. Lambert's rose high above the cheers. The hundred Gentlemen of the Chamber closed the procession.

96. On the square, the King's carriage-door was opened before the kneeling corporation. They looked comical thus, with their robes slipped on in haste and their wigs put on askew. Monsieur Landrageot, the alderman, had

forgotten his ; his bald and shining skull reflected back the light of the torches.

The coach negotiated the bridge between two rows of torches. Its golden dome swayed ; and the giant coachman, the lower half of his body in the light, seemed like a headless colossus. The horses increased their pace.

105. Then all was swallowed up in the night, with the torchbearers waving the stumps of their smoking torches. The noise ceased in the distance. Little by little the streets grew empty, the windows were shut, the lights went out. The doors could be heard slamming. The bells alone persisted. St. Etienne's and the little one from Sainte Nicole's were the first to be silent. The others followed. The swinging of the big bell of St. Lambert's grew slower, with intervals, and suddenly stopped. Vircourt was dropping off to sleep again, dark, peaceful, and silent, while the royal coach, on its broad wheels with their gilded fellies, was hastening across the fields all plunged in night towards frontiers, battles and glory.

—*His Majesty's Pleasure.*

32. Versailles.

Meantime the King summons him to Versailles. Versailles, the most magnificent work constructed by man out of the confused elements of which nature is made up, earth and water, trees and stones, Versailles is the King's pride. Europe listens to the tales that are told of it, wonders, is amazed, and doubts. Is it a reality ? is it not but a legend ? Louis XIV. invites Princes. They come, they see the palaces, the terraces, the forests, the submissive waters, the marbles and the bronzes. The reality surpasses the descrip-

tions. And yet Versailles is not complete : work is still going on at it, new marvels are being prepared. Versailles is the trophy of the victories and the greatness of France ; the trophy must increase from victory to victory.

13. What, then, is this new design of the King's ? Why does he summon Vauban ? It is a secret ; yet it is whispered. The King, writes Madame de Grignan to her mother, means to bring to Versailles and there to hold captive an unknown beauty, fresh, natural, unspoiled, and destined to eclipse all other beauties. . . . Who then is this rustic beauty ? Madame de Grignan takes good care not to reveal it too soon, and Madame de Sévigné reads her letter with impatience. " I assure you I was wondering what her name was, and looking forward to some new beauty who was to arrive and be brought to court ; I suddenly discover that it is a river which is turned aside from its course, precious as it is, by an army of forty thousand men. It certainly can do with no less to make its bed."

26. So it was ; Louis XIV. wished to increase the glory of his fountains and to pour a river into his park. But which ? The Seine flowed close at hand, but at a lower level than the hills ; he must look elsewhere. Old Riquet, who had planned, organised, and successfully carried out the Canal des Deux-Mers, and who seems to have been a sort of Lesseps, full of gigantic schemes, proposed to capture the Loire ; he boasted he could conduct the enterprise. Louis XIV. lent a favourable ear ; but Riquet died ; no one dared to take up his project, and it was decided to be *satisfied with capturing the Eure, thirty miles away*. A machine, set up at Marly, was to take up additional supplies from the Seine and raise them to the level of the park. These schemes were tremendous. The King, " wholly given over to the lofty pleasure of mastering nature," as a contemporary puts it, adopted them both.

40. The army which had taken Luxemburg (forty thousand men, as Madame de Grignan correctly states), was summoned by stages into the plains of Beauce, and began its earthworks. A severe discipline kept it there. The officers and even the colonels were compelled to the toils of splendour as to the toils of war. The difficulties were great. Between the Eure and Versailles were interposed the slopes of a broad valley, and it was hard to span it. Technical knowledge was in those days very limited. Hydraulics scarcely existed : practice was timid and theory non-existent. Topographers, engineers, mathematicians, consulted in a body, opined, disagreed, and Louvois hesitated to give the casting vote. The experience of Vauban, the sort of genius he had for adapting himself to nature, and making her obey him, seemed necessary ; he was summoned, he came.

55. But everything indicates that from the moment of his arrival he was surprised by the difficulty of the works he was asked to study. He read the plans, went over the ground, sounded the soil, and pondered at some length. How indeed to bring up the river, flowing down yonder twenty leagues away? "Vauban," writes Madame de Maintenon, "Vauban told me he had been two months without realising that the thing could be done." The broad and deep valley of Maintenon was the obstacle. Louvois, in accordance with the King's taste for the enormous, and supported in addition by the members of the Academy of Science, voted for an aqueduct crossing the gap on arches. These arches would have to be very high, and bedded on a marshy soil ; Vauban advised against their construction and proposed what he called a "creeping aqueduct," a syphon arranged along the contours of the slopes. Louvois would not listen to him, and replied by a letter which is a curiosity in the history of engineering.

71. Vauban persists, and replies as a professional man in a memoir entitled : " Problem on the weight of water in subterranean aqueducts." Thereupon Louvois loses his temper. " You are making a very big mistake," he replies ; and abruptly revealing his thought, unveiling the reasons for his obstinacy, he cuts short with an order a discussion which he knows to be in vain. " It is useless for you to think of a creeping aqueduct, of which the King refuses to hear ; if the enclosed memoir is not enough to make you see why, the will of your master must forbid you to speak further on the matter."

81. That is clear enough. Vauban knows where he stands, and so do we. The King brushes aside the idea of underground works. He means to have the arches. The cost matters little ; he will supply all the stone and all the hands that are needed ; he wants them for their very immensity, for the trouble they will demand. " The turning of the Eure," writes Domenico Contarini, the Venetian Ambassador, to the Most Serene Republic, " is the enterprise of a superhuman power. The design proposed is to bring up this river by way of the air, to constrain the elements, so to speak, to yield to each other their natural realms."

91. The Italian has understood what to Vauban is incomprehensible ; he gives the news in terms which the King would appreciate. The King wants visible arches and a river in the air ; mud bearing stone, stone bearing waters ; he wants to astonish the centuries and mark his greatness by an eternal symbol.

And those arches—who has not seen them ? Isolated, half-broken, the ruined traces of a fruitless effort, splendid yet beneath the ivy that mantles them, more amazing than any Roman remains, they tell to him who contemplates them the ever recurrent tale of pride intoxicated and undone.

—*Vauban.*

33. *Racine at Saint-Cyr.*

Then the valley knew days of delight. Racine and his adviser Boileau chose together from the Old Testament the subject of Esther. Only the girls who were not yet fifteen were allowed to act the play. Mademoiselle de Lastic, who was to take the part of Ahasuerus, was beautiful as the day; Mademoiselle de Glapion enchanted Racine with her golden voice; Mademoiselle de la Maisonfort, the little canoness, wept like an angel over the woes of Israel. She was entrusted with the part of Elise.

9. Once again innovations were boldly made, and Madame de Maintenon consented to the costumes of Scripture, Persian robes, fillets of pearls on the lovely floating hair. Something of a feverish longing to dress up resulted, and for the young queen of Assyria were embroidered on a flowing mantle the diamonds the King had used when he danced in ballets in the old days. Finally, in one of the big dormitories, a theatre was arranged. On January 26th, 1689, the king, with the Dauphin and a few bishops, came to taste of the dainty dish. He was delighted, for all was beautiful, with the beauty of nature in which the very subject of the poem, the lines, the melodious young voices, the girlish gestures, were harmoniously mingled. The choruses especially seemed descended from the heavens: these mouths of babes sang only what they could feel and understand, only what their pious mistresses taught them every day.

25. The King asked if he might come again, accompanied once more by bishops and by eight Jesuits. "To-day," said Madame de Maintenon, "we are acting for the saints." The saints and censors had been hard on the theatre. That evening, Bossuet, Bourdaloue, the court confessors,

smiled their grave approval. The young actresses, behind the curtain, tremblingly sang the *Veni Creator* ; Racine, managing with Boileau the entries, giving some final hints, shunned the incense of praise.

34. After the saints, they played at the king's request for the nobles of the court, for the ministers, then one day for the King and Queen of England. A game for children, said Racine, became the object of the enthusiasm of the whole court. Madame de Sévigné, Madame de La Fayette asked of their old friend a seat at the play. Bossuet came again. The repeated presence of the King gave the celebrations a magnetic attraction. He was to be seen, smiling, courteous, happy, assuming in his sheepfold the air of a good shepherd. His sovereign dignity he retained, but he laid aside its pomp. He left his suite behind in lobbies and courts. Entering the room he would bow and pull out of his pocket the list of guests which Madame de Maintenon had handed him. Then, standing at the door of the room, his cane held slanting across it, he himself supervised the entry of the guests, softening this terrifying checking with a word or a smile. When everyone had got in, he had the door shut, and sometimes remained right at the back, ready to receive unobtrusively a note or a despatch. Madame de Maintenon would establish herself a little behind him, near enough to catch his remarks and to pass on to him the admiring comments which, from row to row, reached her ears.

54. One evening, as he was leaving the room, his glance met the lively countenance of Madame de Sévigné ; the latter curtsying low in her ample gown of grey taffeta, the King stopped and said to her : " They tell me you are delighted, Madame ; " *they* meant Madame de Maintenon. And the Marquise hastened to her writing desk to give her daughter a taste of the morsel of honeycombs he had

brought away from the valley : a smile, a bow, a word from the King. Madame de La Fayette, to whom the King had not spoken, always rather peevish, came away from the performance saying : " The amount of enthusiasm people get up for it is simply incomprehensible ! " But those who loved youth, poetry, and religion comprehended it quite well.

66. Soon a shadow passed over these charming heads. The evenings which delighted the King, the saints, the dowagers, were they as desirable for the young ladies ? They were anxious ever to excel themselves. The bigger girls had voices even more harmonious than those of their juniors, and they were burning to chant in rhythm the lines of Racine. Madame de Maintenon weakened ; she even allowed a married lady, her niece, Madame de Caylus, aged seventeen, to play the part of Esther. The choruses were reserved for the infant cherubs, and the seniors appeared on the stage, even more charming than the little girls.

77. But they were more sensitive as well. There were fusses and rivalries. One day Mademoiselle de la Maisonfort forgot her part : Racine grew impatient. " The play's ruined ! " said he ; but forthwith he wiped with his handkerchief the great sorrowful eyes brimming with tears. There were more than tears ; one day, there was a great commotion, for a note was seized written by a page to an Israelite girl ! Between the performances the young ladies were absent-minded at their lessons. The little fits of exultation of those who were acting left little fits of melancholy among those who were not.

86. Madame de Maintenon grew anxious, and above all, the Bishop of Chartres, that meticulous judge, grew angry. The King gave way and sacrificed his innocent pleasure. No more Esther ! no more Persian robes, no more oriental fillets on flowing locks, no more of the saintly but intoxicat-

ing harmonies of Racine ! The young ladies knew no other stuffs than homespuns and ratines ; the only visits they received were those of their relations from the country. The acting copies of *Esther* were closed ; once more were opened austere lesson-books, dull histories, grammars, synonyms. Later on, in 1691, they acted *Athalie*, but behind closed doors, in Madame de Maintenon's room, without costumes. And those who saw the play considered it a " bore."

—*Madame de Maintenon.*

34. *Kipling's Englishmen.*

Those Englishmen of Rudyard Kipling's—you have met them : young fellows in tan shoes and travelling caps, slender, well-set-up, smoking stumpy briar pipes ; or white-moustached gentlemen, who hold themselves well, lean, ruddy of cheek, with fresh and candid eyes. You have seen them on the decks of liners, in pyjamas after the morning tub, in a tweed jacket all the day, and in evening dress at night in the smoking-room, in front of their glass of whisky and soda, or else in the drawing-room, the assiduous attendants of the young woman in a light dress with pearls round her neck, who sings them English ballads, that *Dreamland Faces* or *Marygolds* which Meredith, quick to seize every detail, ridiculed in a word, and which for the average English gentlepeople represent music. These men have struck you as downright, simple, honourable, and wholesome. If you were introduced to them, you have felt the perfect and unostentatious courtesy of their welcome. Perhaps, in England or in India, you have received their hospitality. It is ample, dignified, attentive, uncumbered by phrases and ceremonies : they have gone to trouble to be of use to you, they have treated you precisely like one of themselves.

21. And yet you have felt that those Englishmen never would regard you as one of themselves, that they were a race apart, almost outside ordinary humanity ; and that a Russian, an Italian, a German, even an American are far nearer to you, more get-at-able and more natural and human. And in fact, in the eyes of an Englishman, a Frenchman, a German, an Italian, a Russian belong in the lump to a species which in England is described as *continental*, and which is the opposite of the Island species. There exist a certain way of standing, of bowing, of wearing one's beard, a certain expression of the eye or shrug of the shoulders, a certain shade of ideas and sentiments which, to this Englishman, are of the "continental" type ; and you have not been long in discovering that the said type does not impress him.

35. Nay more, if you have read Rudyard Kipling, you observe that his Bengali babus, the portly gentlemen of Calcutta with their bronzed and flabby faces, whom he shows speaking without end in the Legislative Council of Bengal, in the phrases of classic oratory, in speeches which go back to the principles of things, seem less different from his Russians and his Frenchmen than these latter do from his exact, active and taciturn English gentlemen. You recall the portraits he had traced of these "continentals," who are not all Europeans : the literary First Lieutenant of the French navy, spying on board one of Her Majesty's men-of-war, who notes down his observations in a dramatic and poetic style with Ah ! 's and Oh ! 's, rows of dots, and melting apostrophes to the twilight which become comic as soon as they are translated into English.

49. You recollect, in *Captains Courageous*, the appearance, in the Newfoundland fogs, of the French fishing-boat, the shouts and squabbles of its red-jerseyed mariners who are like nothing so much as the itinerant singers of the

Riviera. You remember, in *Judson and the Empire*, the Portuguese crew, the fire-eating orations of the little olive-skinned men whom the stolid commander of a wretched English gun-boat, by a manoeuvre worthy of Nelson and the imperial race, strands so pitifully on the shoals of a river. You remember, in *The Man Who Was*, the Cossack officer, the emotional, supple, loquacious, lying Slav who crosses the Afghan frontier to spy on a regiment of the Queen's, the display of brute drunkenness and hysteria he gives the stiff, magnificent British officers, the secret contempt of these latter who, as a point of honour and moved by self-respect, observe before him to the end their watch-words of hospitality. And then you think of the Bandar Log of the Jungle, their grimaces, defiances, disputes and somersaults, of their agitated republic whose praises they loudly hymn, and which in the eyes of an Englishman might well serve as the flippant symbol of a Republic in which we are more personally interested. Let us hope rather that he is thinking of the incorrigible Irish. Or again let us comfort ourselves by reflecting that Kipling was in the United States, another land of highly-strung democracy, when he wrote the marvellous history of the monkeys.

74. All the same, these memories worry you. Your English friends of yesterday, those well-bred men with simple and capable eyes, those officers and administrators, those players of golf or of polo, who so generously honoured the letter of introduction you brought them, is it thus that they visualise the foreigner? Does their genuine kindness only signify their assurance of superiority? Calm yourself: the prejudices of Kipling are those of the exceedingly exclusive old Tory Albion, very proud and very beautiful, which is disappearing so rapidly, and Kipling is the last Englishman to have given utterance to to them. These

excellent men merely regard you as being of a different species because you belong to a different world. The fact that you are not "of the Blood," as the author of *The Seven Seas* puts it, matters a great deal less to them than it does to him.

88. But you do not belong to their Jungle ; you do not know its hunting, its business, its games, its law. Were you born in the country ? Did you ride a pony at the age of seven ? In any case you have not been morally and physically trained at those disciplines of cricket and football, at those compulsory games which teach how to command and to obey, and in life in general, to strive not for oneself but for the success of one's group, to *play for the team*. You have not, clad in a white surplice, sung from your childhood upwards, and three times a day on Sundays, the Psalms and the Litany in the Anglican stalls of Eton or of Harrow ; you have not been subject to the influence of a bracing liturgy which associates for ever in the mind the idea of the nation with the idea of religion, and moulds the soul to the attitude of respect by making it habituated to the feeling of reverence. If you have learned the honourable art of boxing, you do not know what to an Englishman is the essential feature of it : how to smile when you get a blow full in the face. You feel no pride in the great historic institutions of England. If the daily toast of the messes of India is drunk in your presence : *The King, gentlemen !* you do not spring instinctively to your feet to burst out in reply with a shout of "*The King, God bless him !*"

109. You do not belong to a great English corporate body, regimental or administrative ; you do not know the importance of these rites or traditions, these pass-words and words of order. Do you understand the joy, the strength, the pride, the fulness of being one feels in being

an integral part of such a body? Do you understand how in hours of crisis, if there comes a war, a famine, an epidemic of plague or of cholera, one devotes the whole of one's self, of one's strength, of one's ambitions to the duty and the honour of the whole? Do you understand how in everyday times the reputation of a regiment is staked on a game of polo?

120. But above all your exterior is amazing and jarring. Your hair is cropped, you are too formal or too expansive; you click your heels when you bow, and the next minute you gesticulate with your shoulders. Your conversation is not made up of minute anecdotes related right off the reel, with the simplest of words, in a humorous and telegraphic style. You possess general ideas, and you expound the same; you theorise, which is ridiculous and almost contemptible. You do not say: *By Jove!* You display your emotions. Your eyes are expressive, too civilised and too towny. You look intellectual, clever. You seem to have thought too much and lived too much. Cares and fatigues and doubts have passed over your brow, and left on it their trace. In short you do not fit into the well-known, admitted, requisite type created by the education and social surroundings of England, the type which makes an English gentleman so remarkable an object on the Continent, and so similar in England to all other English gentlemen.

—*New English Studies.*

35. *The Normans.*

It is an *Iliad*, an *Odyssey*, is that whirlwind expansion of the Norman race across an astounded Europe. But what an epic—barbarous, at once ferocious and gorgeous, and crumbling away into nothingness!

4. Behold them prowling in their galleys around the coasts of the Carolingian empire ; they advance as far as the Mediterranean, and such is the terror they spread over the dim future, that Charlemagne himself weeps in anxiety about it at Narbonne. And as soon as the great Emperor is gone, the invasion begins. They enter by all the rivers at once. As they pass they plunder Rouen, Nantes, Tours, Angers, Saintes, Bordeaux ; they burn Treves, Cologne, Aix-la-Chapelle. By now they have penetrated to the very heart of Gaul ; and Paris, twice sacked, almost becomes their capital. Are they then to dominate and rule over the haughty West, these barbarian rovers of the coasts ? For an instant men fear as much ; and the ancient Roman world everywhere retires in confusion before this mysterious people that seems to spring up from the waves of all the seas.

20. But no. They are too young yet to establish themselves as masters of the world. They need only a little booty and a little ransom to soothe their swelling ambitions. They retire from the invaded towns as soon as they have entered them ; and as soon as a treaty cedes to them a corner of the huge Europe of feudalism, they throw themselves on it like children on a new toy, glad to parade in their turn in the unforeseen part of lords on dry land.

28. Yet the genius of the race for migration and conquest slumbers only for a century in the rich Neustrian plains. Scarcely have they acquired, in the course of three or four generations, adequate contact with Gallo-Roman civilisation, than behold the Normans setting out once more on their adventures. For a moment they dispute with the Capetians the new-born empire over France. But Paris is too near them, and they need the call of the distant and the unknown. Then it is that they rise up from their new-won fiefs and, now by sea, now by land, accomplish almost

simultaneously those two gigantic deeds of derring-do of the Middle Ages : the conquest of England and that of Italy.

39. They are no longer roving pirates scorned by all the nations : they are the friends and the supporters of Popes, and the Greeks call for their help. They do not wait to be given the corner of a province, they swiftly found vast realms and form dreams of empire. Are they now at last going to bring about definitely the conquest of Europe ? Is this robust and ardent race to re-enact the destiny of ancient Rome and, mistress of the seas from London to Constantinople, to put new life into the old West ?

Confusion and chimera ; a fit that passes as it came ; a storm on land and a hurricane at sea ; all is but a dream ! Scarcely have they entered as conquerors a nation grown old, scarcely have they settled themselves by force in castles and fiefs, than they are lost in the midst of the surrounding population like the eddies of an angry torrent amid the slow and placid waves of the river into which it falls.

55. In France, so little remains of the original conquerors that in the thirteenth century Normandy is the most faithful province of the crown. In 1200, the Norman race is completely molten and lost beneath the skies of Sicily and Calabria ; and in England, except for some surviving barons, the last descendants of the far-famed adventurers are about to exterminate each other in the Wars of the Roses. Wherever they entered as conquerors, the vanquished race gradually resumes its natural evolution, its name, its language, and its interrupted destiny. Not an idiom, nor an institution, nor a law which strictly speaking belongs to the Normans ; they are the wanderers of history, and when they become stable they die.

67. Strange and disappointing fate ! Why is this people smitten with a sterility such that, everywhere victorious,

no-where can it create? It is because, while possessing all the outward brilliance of adventurers and warriors, the Normans have in reality none of the fundamental virtues which make the civilisers and the creators of empires. They are without an aim. They know not what they desire, and they desire nothing, unless to fight and to plunder. Not the slightest conception of duration, nor the slightest ideal for the future. Even when they have become the lords and princes of prosperous kingdoms, they retain for the rest of humanity a brutal contempt and an infuriated hate. Observe them at Rome, whither Robert Guiscard leads them: in a few days they do more harm to the Eternal City than the barbarians of the Danube and the Vistula did in six hundred years. In England, their cruelty towards the conquered is the behaviour of exasperated savages. They are afflicted with misanthropy on a heroic scale. They are the knights of chaos.

84. And yet, in the emptiness and the whirlwind of their brief history, they leave here and there a few traces of their passage in masterpieces of outward splendour. They are childish and violent barbarians, but they are magnificent ones. They have a taste for pomp and ostentation. Out of all the civilisation they discovered in the West, the only thing to delight them is the brilliance of all that serves for the visible adornment of life. They love purple and gold, the solid feasts of prodigal luxury, bright colours, a costly and complicated type of architecture. They experience a child-like joy in the handling of rich stuffs. Roger, the first King of Naples and Amalfi, wears over his tunic a scarlet stole, all embroidered and fringed with gold, glittering with jewels. William, after the conquest of England, returns to Rouen, where, for several days, he entertains at princely banquets all the knights of France and Aquitaine, and displays before their dazzled eyes the precious vessels,

the horn tankards, the plundered treasures and all the marvels torn from the conquered.

The famous Bayeux tapestry shows to what a pitch they extended their love of plastic beauty. Finally come their splendid churches and abbeys. These conquerors, who nowhere founded a city or a law, cast far and wide scattered buildings on which they lavish all the riches of contemporary art.

108. Neither innovators nor inventors, they borrow from the conquered races those forms which delight the eyes. They are Gothic in the north, Byzantine and Arab in Sicily and at Salerno. But, if mad and tasteless, their passion is sincere. They are like young and impatient heirs who, coming into possession of a rich and ancient estate, might let the fields lie fallow to build turrets and pavilions and to drape all the walls with gold and silk. The field is taken back by others, the heirs die or are driven out, but the splendours remain, bearing witness to the passage of irresponsible and luxury-loving children.

And that is why at present, when one calls up in the light of history the marvellous and senseless epic of the Normans, one sees rising in the distance a few isolated buildings of sumptuous and incongruous beauty, against a red and confused background of emptiness and destruction.

—*Blind Guides.*

36. War in the Middle Ages.

For some years the mariners who were subjects of the King of France, that is the Normans and the Flemings, on the one hand, and on the other hand the subjects of the King of England, that is the English and Gascon mariners, had been in perpetual feud. The cause of these incessantly

recurring conflicts was the custom of letters of marque issued by the governments of both countries. Let us take one example among a thousand.

7. An Englishman named Brown, who owned some stuffs valued at two hundred pounds, in the ship of a citizen of Bayonne, named Duverger, complains to the King of England that the said stuffs have been taken in the said ship, by Frenchmen, within sight of Dover ; as compensation he petitions to be allowed to take two hundred pounds' worth of French wines which are in a French ship at anchor in the harbour of Winchelsea. This latter ship belonged to some men of Calais. When these last found themselves defrauded of their wines, in their turn they asked of the Courts of France a letter of marque—such was the name of these permissions—to wage privateering against men of England or of Bayonne and to take from them goods up to the value of £200 sterling. The letters are granted, and a few Bayonne merchants are pillaged ; but they hasten to address themselves to the King of England, that he may sanction their re-taking £200 worth of goods from the subjects of the King of France.

24. There was no special reason why the game—a game of robbery and bloodshed—should ever come to an end. There were indeed reasons why it should not, and why it should ever become more and more involved. These letters of marque were issued by hundreds. The reader will imagine what the relations between French and English mariners developed into from the shores of Spain to those of Zealand.

31. These conflicts were extremely fierce. Normans and Flemings, like English and Bayonnais, were proud to hang at their mast-heads the sailors of the opposing party of whom they managed to get hold. They enjoyed contemplating the corpses swaying in the wind. Now we see the

Normans seizing merchandise borne in an English ship attacked in the open seas, after drowning all the crew ; the English retort by cropping the ears of the sailors they find in a French vessel. On other occasions, French or English send the boats adrift, after hacking off, as a preliminary, the feet and hands of the whole crew. In the sun's glare, out at sea, lying on the deck, the poor wretches would expire in hideous agony. It would take us too long to review the infinite series of these massacres and robberies.

46. The officials of the French King and those of the King of England united their efforts to try to re-establish peace between the rival nations. They would bring together in a given port the mariners on both sides whom they were able to collect, and make them all swear to remain at peace ; but far from being calmed, the strife assumed ever greater proportions. The ships of both nations no longer went to sea unless in fleets, so as to give each other mutual aid, and when two hostile fleets met, real naval battles took place.

56. On April 24th, 1293, a large number of English seamen left the harbour of Portsmouth on more than 200 vessels. A few days afterwards the Normans, on 225 well-found ships, left the estuary of the Charente. They met on May 15th, 1293, off the Breton coast, in the latitude of Cape Saint-Mathieu. The ships were all strengthened with " castles and hustings," which transformed them into ships of war. At the mast-heads floated long pendants of red samite two ells wide and thirty long. These banners, say the English seamen in the recital they have left of these happenings, banners called in French " boucan," mean " death without remedy and mortal war in all places where mariners be." The fight was terrible. The English won the victory. The French vessels were taken or sunk. A few Normans, on light skiffs, were successful in reaching the Breton coast.

71. It was reported to the King of France that, in the English fleet, there were sixty strong ships of war which Edward I. had had fitted out in view of an expedition to Palestine. The English government must then have encouraged the enterprise. A few days after the victory, the English and Bayonnais surprised La Rochelle; they entered the town, slew, plundered, burned, then returned home laden with booty.

—*The Middle Ages.*

NOTE.

Since a literal translation of the poetry would often sound bald or ludicrous, the translator has used greater freedom in rendering the verse passages than is either desirable or necessary with the prose.

37. *The Angelus.*

They have left their tree and taken up once more the day's toil. The shadow, already turned from the morning to the setting sun, stretches out longer at the foot of the oak and will soon fall on them; the lake, with softer gleam, is rippled by the evening breeze. The furrow grows longer and approaches the other edge of the field. But what sound has thrilled amid the leaves? The bell, like the sighing of waters rising from the shores, spreads in the feeling air the viewless sound; and, swung by childish hands in the village, comes from so far away to beat upon men's thoughts.

11. 'Tis the angelus that sounds, and reminds men everywhere that the morning and the evening of their days are the Lord's. At this call of religion the ploughman stops ; he turns towards the belfry, bares his head, clasps his strong hands, whence falls the goad, and for a little lets his soul rise higher than the furrow, whilst the children, kneeling on the sod, link their tiny fingers in their mother's hands.

38. *The Valley.*

Here is the narrow track of the dim vale. From the side of these slopes hang thick woods, which, as they cast their mingled shade over my brows, bury me wholly in silence and in peace. There, two brooks hidden amid the over-arching green follow with their windings the valley's swell ; for a moment they mingle their waves and their murmuring sounds, and full near to their source they find their nameless end.

9. The fountain of my days has trickled away even as they do ; it has passed noiseless, nameless, irrevocable ; but their water is clear, and my turbid soul will never have reflected the beams of a cloudless day. Their cool beds, their crowns of shadow, hold me captive all day on the banks of brooks ; like a child lulled by a monotonous song, my soul sinks to sleep at the murmur of the waters.

17. Ah, 'tis there that, walled in by a rampart of green, by a narrow horizon that is yet wide enough for my eyes, I love to stay my wonted steps and, alone amid nature, to hear naught but the waters, to see only the skies. In my life I have seen and felt and loved o'ermuch ; while yet living I come to seek the calm of Lethe. Fair spot, be thou for me those shores where man forgets : oblivion alone must henceforth be my joy.

25. My heart is at peace, my soul lies silent ; the distant tumult of the world dies away as it reaches me, like a far-off sound growing weaker in the distance and borne by the wind to the uncertain ear. From here I see life, as through a cloud, fading away for me into the shadows of the past ; love alone has lived on, as a mighty picture alone survives from a forgotten dream when one awakens. Rest thee, O my soul, in this final refuge, even as a traveller who, with heart filled with hope, sits him down at the gates of the town ere he enters in, and for a moment breathes the scented evening air.

39. *The Child.*

Yonder the Turks have passed. All is ruin and lamentation. Chios, the isle of vineyards, is now but a gloomy reef, Chios, sheltered 'neath her harbours, Chios, who mirrored in the waves her mighty woods, her hill-slopes, her palaces, and at times a dancing choir of maidens at eve.

7. All is abandoned. Stay, no ; sitting alone near the blackened walls, a blue-eyed child, a Greek, bowed his outraged head. For refuge, for support, he had a white hawthorn bush, a flower forgotten like himself in the great destruction. Ah ! hapless child, barefoot on the craggy rocks ! Alas, to wipe away the tears from those eyes of thine, blue as the sky and the waves, to send glancing through their azure, now stormy with tears, the gay light of joy and play, to raise up thy fair head, what would'st thou ? Fair child, what must we give thee to bind joyously and to make joyously descend in curls over thy white shoulder that hair, which has not felt the insult of the sword, which falls sadly, scattered round thy lovely brow like the leaves on the weeping-willow ?

25. To make thee smile at me, wilt have a beauteous woodland bird, singing with a song sweeter than the oboe's note, clearer than the cymbals? What would'st thou? a flower, lovely fruit, or the wondrous bird?—"Friend," said the Greek child, the child with eyes of blue, "I will have powder and balls."

40. *The Queen of Spain.*

THE QUEEN. Peace! (*She goes a little way away from Casilda and resumes her musing.*) Why am not I, who fear all these grandees, still in my kindly Germany, with my good parents! How we ran in the grass, my sister and I! And then peasants would pass, dragging home their sheaves, and we would speak with them. 'Twas all delight. Alas, one eventide came a man—he was all in black—who said, while I held my sister's hand, my gentle comrade, "Madame, you are to be Queen of Spain." My father was glad and my mother wept. Now they both weep. I will have this casket sent by stealth to my father; he will be pleased indeed.—See now, all saddens me. My birds from Germany, all are dead.

(*Casilda makes the motion of wringing the necks of birds, looking askance at the Camerera as she does so.*)

14. Then too they prevent me from having the flowers of my country. No word of love thrills ever in my ear. To-day I am a queen: once I was free! As you say, this park is very gloomy of an evening, and the walls are so high, they stop one from seeing out.—Oh, weary life! (*Distant singing is heard without.*) What is that sound?

CASILDA. They are washerwomen passing and singing

down yonder, over the heath. (*The song comes nearer ; the words can be made out. The Queen listens greedily.*)

21. VOICES WITHOUT.

Why should we list to the woodland bird ?
The tenderest of songs in thy voice is heard.
Let God show or veil the stars of the skies !
The purest of stars shines in thy eyes.
Let April renew the garden in bloom !
The fairest of flowers in thy heart has its room.
That star of the day, that bird all of flame,
That flower of the soul, love is its name !

(*The voices grow fainter and more distant.*)

36. THE QUEEN (*dreamily*) Love ! yes, they at least are happy. Their voices and their songs hurt me and heal me at the same time.

THE DUCHESS (*to the Duennas*). Those women whose singing is annoying the Queen, let them be driven off !

THE QUEEN (*sharply*). What ! they can hardly be heard. Poor women ! I wish them to pass in peace, Madame. (*To Casilda, pointing out to her a window in the background*). The wood is not so thick this way, and that window looks out on to the country-side ; come, let us try and see them. (*She goes towards the window with Casilda.*)

THE DUCHESS (*rising with a deep curtsy*). A Queen of Spain must not look out of windows.

THE QUEEN (*stopping and retracing her steps*). What now ! the lovely setting sun that fills the vales, the golden evening dust that rises on the road, the distant songs that every ear may hear, exist no more for me ! I have bidden the world adieu. I cannot even see God's world ! I cannot even see the freedom of others !

52. THE DUCHESS (*motioning to those present to withdraw*).

Withdraw, to-day is the feast of the Holy Apostles (*i.e.* SS. Peter and Paul, June 29). (*Casilda goes some steps forward to the door. The Queen stops her.*)

THE QUEEN. Are you leaving me too?

CASILDA (*indicating the Duchess*). Madame, we are told to withdraw.

THE DUCHESS (*curtseying to the ground before the Queen*). We must leave Her Majesty to her devotions. (*Exeunt all, bowing deeply.*)
—Ruy Blas.

41. *Waterloo.*

Evening was falling ; the strife was fierce and dark. The offensive was his, and almost the victory. He held Wellington at bay against a wood. With telescope in hand he gazed at times on the centre of the fight, that uncertain point where sways the hand-to-hand fighting, that frightful living tangle, and at times on the horizon, gloomy as the sea. Sudden, in joy, he cried : "Grouchy !"—"Twas Blücher.

9. Hope changed sides, the combatants changed soul ; the *mêlée*, amid shouts, grew wider as spreads a flame. The English artillery smashed our squares. The plain where fluttered the tattered flags was now, amid the cries of the dying who were being slaughtered, but a flaming gulf, red as a smithy fire—a gulf in which regiments fell like lengths of walls, in which lay low, like ripened ears of corn, the tall drum majors with their towering plumes, 'neath which could half be seen their hideous wounds. Fearsome slaughter ! moment of destiny ! The Man, filled with disquiet, felt the battle giving way under his hand. Behind a crest was massed the Guard, the Guard, the last hope and the final thought ! "Come on, let them have the Guard !" shouted he. And lancers, grenadiers with drill gaiters,

dragoons that Rome would have taken for her legionaries, cuirassiers, artillery-men dragging up their thunder, helmeted with black colback or polished casque, all, the men of Friedland and the men of Rivoli, understanding that they were to die in these rejoicings, saluted their god, erect amid the tempest. In one shout their lips cried : " Long live the Emperor ! " Then, with slow steps, led by their bands, unfrenzied, calm, smiling at the English grape, the Imperial Guard plunged into the furnace.

35. Alas ! Leaning over his Guard Napoleon watched ; and, as soon as they had debouched below the dark cannon spitting out their sulphurous breath, saw one after another, in this hideous gulf, those regiments of granite and steel melting as wax melts in the blast of a brazier. They went, arms at the " Ready," heads held high, with stoic calm. Not one held back. Sleep, valiant dead ! The rest of the army hung uncertain above their corpses and watched the Guard die.

44. Then it was that suddenly raising her voice of despair, Panic, that giantess with terrified face who, pallid, sowing fear amid the proudest battalions, suddenly transforming the colours into rags, at certain moments, a smoke-born phantom, rises and grows ever higher in the midst of armies, Panic appeared to the fear-struck soldier and, wringing her hands, shrieked : " Each for himself ! "— Each for himself ! Shame ! Horror ! The mouths of all shouted it ; across the country, maddened, panic-struck, frantic, as though some blast had passed o'er them, among the heavy waggons and the powder-covered artillery-waggons, rolling into ditches, hiding in the rye, spurning shakos, cloaks, rifles, spurning the Eagles, these veterans, oh misery ! beneath the Prussian sabres trembled, howled, and wept and fled.

61. In the twinkling of an eye, even as a blazing straw is

borne away on the wind, there faded away that empty sound which was once the Grande Armée ; and that plain, alas, where to-day one can dream, saw in their flight those before whom the universe had fled. Forty years have passed, and that corner of earth—Waterloo, that sad and lonely upland, that ill-omened field where God made so many ruins to be but one, still shudders at having seen the flight of the giants !

42. *The Future.*

Times to come, vision sublime ! The nations have risen from the abyss ; the gloomy desert is passed. After the sands, the greensward, and the earth is like a bride, and man is even as a bridegroom !

7. Even now the lifted eyes plainly see this beauteous dream which one day will be reality ; for God will loosen every chain, for the past is called hatred, and the future's name is love !

Even now in our miseries is budding the union of the sister-nations ; flying over the darkness of our tree tops, like a hornet awakened by dawn, Progress, that bee of the night, makes good out of our ills.

19. Rust eats away the halberds. Of your cannons, of your bombards, O captains, remains not a fragment large enough to take from the fountains enough to give a bird to drink.

Old grudges are wiped out. The hearts and thoughts of all, inspired by the same design, are now only one glorious sheaf ; to bind it God takes the rope of the tocsin of old.

31. In the deeps of heaven twinkles a point of light. See, it grows bigger, it shines, it comes nearer, huge and ruddy. O universal Republic, thou art now but the spark ; to-morrow thou shalt be the sun.

43. *My Daughters.*

She was pale and yet rosy, a little thing with her long hair. She often said, "I dare not," and never said, "I will." In the evenings she took my Bible to make her sister spell from it, and like a tranquil lamp she lightened that young heart. On the Holy Book that fills me with wonder their pure eyes would be fixed, that book from which the one was learning to read, the other to think !

13. Above the little one, who would not have read alone, she bent her enchanting brow, and you might have called her a grand-mother, so gently did she speak. She would tell her, "Be very good !" without ever mentioning the devil. Their hands wandered from page to page, over Moses and Solomon, over Cyrus who came out of Persia, and Moloch and Leviathan, over hell through which Jesus passes and Eden through which Satan crawls.

25. For me, I listened. O mighty joy, to see the sister by the sister's side ! In the silence my eyes were enraptured by this ineffable sweetness. And in the lowly, deserted room, where we felt, hidden away all three, the breath of the night and the woods coming in through the open window, whilst from the majestic text their hearts, as they eagerly read, drank in the lovely, the true, the just, it seemed to me, to me the dreamer, that I could hear praises being sung around us in God's holy house, and could see His book trembling beneath His angels' fingers !

44. *The Ship.*

One day as I stood on the shores of the restless sea, I saw passing with swelling sails a swift ship, girt about by winds and waves and stars ; and I heard as I leaned into

the abyss of heaven that borders that other abyss, a voice whose lips I could not see, speaking in my ear.

9. "Poet, thou dost well ! poet with the sorrow-stricken brow, thou dreamest by the waters and drawest up from the sea many things that are beneath the deep waves. The sea is the Lord, whom each man's fate, be it weal or woe, shows forth and names ; the wind is the Lord ; the star is the Lord ; the ship—that is man."

45. *At Les Feuillantines.*

My two brothers and I were quite little boys. Our mother used to tell us : " You can play, but I forbid you to tread on the flowers or go up the ladders." Abel was the eldest, I was the smallest. We used to eat up our bread so greedily that women would laugh as we passed by them. We used to go up into the convent loft to play ; and there, while we played, we often looked at a book out of reach on the top of a cupboard.

10. One day we climbed right up to this black book. I know not what we did to get it, but I well remember that it was a Bible. That old book had a scent of incense about it. Filled with rapture, we went and sat down in a corner. Pictures everywhere—what joy, what delirious joy ! Then we opened it wide on our knees, and from the very first word it seemed so delightful to us that, forgetting to play, we began to read.

19. Thus, all three, we read all the morning, of Joseph, Ruth and Boaz, and the Good Samaritan, and ever more under its spell we read it again in the evening. Even so children, if they have taken a bird of the air, laugh as they call one another, and are astonished in their joy to feel in their hands the softness of its feathers.

46. The Deluge.

Meantime, all had slowly disappeared by degrees beneath the steadily rising waves. The cities were no more, no living thing remained, and the waters gave but one single aspect to the face of the world. Only at times above the deep water a drowned palace showed its gilded front ; a few domes, like enchanted isles, remained over to bear witness to the splendours of their towns. There for yet a moment more appeared two mortal forms, one a disgrace to the throne, the other the shame of the altar, one clinging to the arm of his own statue, the other to the lofty temple of a fallen idol. Both, till death came upon them, in empty words accused themselves of having called it down with the floods of heaven.

15. Further on, gazing o'er the watery waste, died another king, solitary on his pyramid. Within that immense tomb there had ere this sought refuge his whole nation of workers who had built it ; but the pitiless sea, creeping on into the tombs, had torn all away from the depths of the catacombs, the dying and their gods, the immortal shades, and the embalmed race, and the sphynx of the altars ; and this king was thrown down on to the darkskinned mummies who were borne crashing one against another, asleep in their floating beds. As he expired, he groaned to see beside him his demigods passing away, shorn of their immortality, once snatched from death, now won by death once more from under the deep-hid palaces of their eternal tombs. He had yet just the time to think once that none henceforth would know the name of so many kings, that henceforth their history would count but as a single day, since their posterity and their glory were dying together.

47. Roncevaux.

Meantime, with minds at rest, Charlemagne and his warriors were descending the mountain-side and talking one with another. Already there appeared on the horizon the vales of Luz and Argelès, marked out by their water-courses. The army applauded. The troubadour's lute was tuned to sing of the willows of the Adour ; the wine of France flowed in the tankards of the foe ; the laughing soldier spoke with the shepherd maid.

9. Roland held the mountain ; all passed without fear.

10. Sitting carefree on a black palfrey that paced clad in its purple trappings, Turpin said, as he held the holy amulets : " Sire, fiery clouds appear in the heavens. Call a halt to your march ; man must not tempt Providence. By my lord Saint Denis, of a surety those are souls passing up through the air on these blazing mists. Two lightning flashes have gleamed, and then two again."

18. Here was there heard the distant sound of the horn. The astonished Emperor, starting back, reins up the adventurous steps of his charger. " Do you hear ? " says he. " Yes, it is herdsmen calling back their flocks scattered abroad over the heights," replied the archbishop, " or the stifled voice of green Oberon the dwarf as he speaks with his Faery." And the emperor presses on ; but his care-laden brow is darker and blacker than the storm in the heavens. He dreads betrayal ; and while he muses on it, the horn bursts forth and dies away, breaks out once more and prolongs its blast. " Woe ! 'tis my nephew ! woe ! for if Roland calls for aid, he must be dying. Back, knights, let us cross the mountain once more ! Tremble once more 'neath our feet, false soil of Spain ! "

33. On the highest sweep of the mountains the horses

are checked. They are white with foam ; beneath their feet Roncevaux is barely lit up by the dying fires of day. Far on the horizon flees the standard of the Moor. " Turpin, saw you naught in the depths of the torrent ? " " There see I two knights, one dead, one dying. Both are crushed beneath a black rock ; the stronger holds aloft in his hand an ivory horn. His soul, as he breathed it forth, called twice upon us."

Dear God ! how sad in the depths of the woods is the sound of the horn !

48. *Veterans of the Old Guard.*

They were not the dead called up by the sound of the drum at night, but rather some *old comrades of the old 'un* who were celebrating the great return. Since the last and greatest battle, one has grown thin, another stout ; the coat once made to fit their shape is now too big or too small. Noble tatters, heroic cast-offs, sacred rags starred by a cross, fairer in their valiant absurdity than the mantles of kings ! A nerveless plume waves droopily above their napless, rusty colbachs ; the moth has eaten into their hole-riddled dolmans near those other holes made by the bullets. Their buckskin breeches, now too wide, are wrinkled in a thousand folds on their thighs, their rusted sabre, now a heavy load, digs into the ground and flaps against the wall ; or else a grotesque corpulence, buttoned in with great difficulty, makes of the old hero with all his ribbons a mannikin at which one almost laughs.

25. Mock them not, comrade ; rather salute with bare head these Achilles of an Iliad that Homer could not in-

vent. Respect their hoary heads ! On their brows, darkened by the suns of twenty climes, their scars carry on the furrows made by age. Their skin, oddly blackened, tells of Egypt with its scorching suns ; and Russia's snows still powder their white locks. If their hands tremble, it is doubtless with the cold of the Beresina, and if they limp, 'tis because the way is long from Cairo to Vilna. If they are rheumatic, it is because in their wars the colours were their only coverings ; and if their sleeve sits badly, it is because a ball has carried off their arm. Let us not make a jest of these men, whom the street urchin pursues with his laughter : they were the day of which we are but the evening, and maybe the night.

49. *Venice.*

In ruddy Venice stirs not a boat, not a fisher on the waters, not a lantern's light. Alone as he sits on the strand, the great lion lifts his brazen paw against the quiet horizon. Around him in groups, the ships and sloops, like herons asleep in their rings, sleep on the misty waters, and fly their flags one across another in light dances.

17. The fading moon covers her fleeting face that is half veiled in starry cloud. Even so does the lady abbess of Sainte-Croix settle her many-folded cloak over her surplice ; and the palaces of old, and the solemn porticoes, and the white stairways of the knights, and the bridges and streets, the mournful statues, the shifting gulf that trembles in the breeze, all, all is silent save only the guards with their long pikes, who watch on the battlements of the arsenals.

50. Hope.

I have known harsh sufferings when yet a youth ; I have watched the woods grow green, and have striven to love. I know how many a hope the earth can swallow up, and what we must sow in it if we would reap. But what I have felt, what I would fain write to thee, is what the angels of grief have taught me ; I know it and can tell it thee all the better that their sword, as it pierced my heart, has inscribed it there.

9. " Oh creature of a day that stirrest for an hour, of what comest thou complaining, who maketh thee to weep ? Thy soul is disturbed within thee, and thou thinkest that she weeps : thy soul is immortal, and thy tears shall be dried.

13. " Thou dost feel thy heart seized on by a woman's whim, and sayest it must break through its sufferings. Thou prayest God to comfort thy soul : thy soul is immortal and thy heart shall be healed.

17. " The sorrow of a moment disturbs and devours thee ; thou sayest the past doth veil the future from thee. Lament not yesterday ; let the dawn appear : thy soul is immortal, and time shall pass away.

" Thy body is laid low by the sickness of thy mind ; thou dost feel thy brow weighed down and thy knees giving way. Fall then, kneel down, O senseless thing : thy soul is immortal, and death shall come.

25. " Thy bones in thy coffin shall fall into dust ; thy memory, thy name, thy glory shall decay ; but not thy love, if thy love is dear to thee ; thy soul is immortal and will remember it well."

51. Sadness.

I have lost my strength and my life, and my friends and my gaiety ; I have lost even the pride which made men believe in my genius. When I met Truth, I took her for a friend ; when I felt and comprehended her, I was already sickened by her.

9. And yet is she eternal, and those who have known her not have known naught here below. God speaks, and man must answer Him. The only good on earth that yet remains mine is that I have sometimes wept.

52. To a Branch of Almond-Blossom.

Already a thousand blushing, swelling buds and a thousand ivory blossoms make long ribbons and starry knots on your black bark, young branch ! And yet, 'neath its snowy shroud in the colourless haze, 'twixt the sky's azure and our soddened furrows, February floateth still. One hour of sun, the blue horizon, the morning's warmth have made you think, alas, that the season of fair weather was restored to us.

13. At times barren winter has its treacherous suns, and its face is decked in gold, but it cannot ripen even one of the flowers with which you are adorned. After this gentle beam with its flash of love, the night will be deadly ; to make spring stay with us we need more than one fair day, more than a single swallow.

21. Let not all your rosy buds break forth till the cold is ended ; for the season of fruitfulness and the real suns guard well your sap. Winter will sully the purity of your blossoms, and short is their reign ; their cups will melt as would melt in summer a cup of snow. Then when that day

shall shine which is to give new life to all, to plants and souls alike, it will expend on you its dew and its beams without making aught to stir to life.

33. All then beneath the heavens, all shall be awakened ; all the other branches shall raise wide into the air their enamelled ebony and their snowy coronals ; and the sun shall come to tint their lovely brows, their many-shaded lips, and the wind shall make them bend in languor even as a bride. The slopes shall redden, and the furrows pied with flowers and green ; all the trees of the woods, all the meadow-lawns shall appear in their adornments.

45. Everywhere shall be sounds of joy, honey in every blossom, gold in every cloud ; but you, in this harmony, without voice or colour, you will be ashamed and naked. Never will a singing bird have watched on you for the droning insect ; you will give no green foliage to the summer, nor fruits to the autumn. One day has robbed you of all : its beams, already dead, shone but to betray you ; and you have lost all the treasures of your youth, staked upon a smile.

53. *Marie.*

One day as we sat on Kerlô bridge, laughingly dangling our feet in the water's flow, joyous to be disturbing it, or to stop in its flight some branch or piece of floating herbage, or, 'neath the green willows, to be scaring the fish who came in the sunlight to sleep by the grassy edge ; alone in this wild spot, and with no sound, no breath awakening the still and quiet valley save our childish laughter and the echo of our voices which floated up in peals and fled into the woods—for the river, deeply-banked betwixt two forests, flowed right down to the sea, slow and clear and

icy-cold ; alone, I say, in this solitude, and free the live-long day, we felt as we played our hearts brimming o'er with love.

15. 'Twas a joy to see beneath the blue and limpid water a thousand little fish with quivering tails as they nibbled or chased one another, or, swimming in shoals, opened and shut their silver fins ; then the splashing salmon ; and on her stony bed the eel which lurks on the river's banks ; numberless insects, winged or transparent, taking the whole day to go up the stream ; bees, and gnats, and lively dragon-flies, fleeing amid the reeds from the swallows' beaks.

25. One came and settled on Marie's hand, so strange of aspect that I hastened up to crush it ; but already my little peasant maid had seized the diaphanous fly, and as she saw the poor beastie quivering in her fingers ; " Dear heart, how it trembles ! oh, why should we kill it ? " said she. And into the air her pure and rounded mouth lightly blew the frail creature ; swiftly unfolding its two flashing wings, it set off, and joyfully mounted up praising God.

35. Since that day, many days have passed, and many years, alas ! A child, I was then entering on my fifteenth year ; but the days and the years have gone by without dimming these childish memories ; and other days shall come, and new loves ; and the love of my youth, that fairest, freshest love, that love of fifteen years shall ever bloom anew in the shadow of my heart.

54. *Moonlight.*

The sea is grey, calm, and vast ; in vain does the eye sweep round its circle. There is no end and no beginning, neither day nor night, no foam-fringed billow, no stars in the depths of the air. No light fades out and none is lit ;

the void is neither bright nor dark. The albatrosses, the harsh-voiced petrels, porpoises and dolphins, all have fled. Over the quiet wastes hovers a weariness, vague and deep. No sound, and not a breath. The heavy, slowly-heaving hull scarcely shows above the dull waters the copper of its polished flanks; and, along the hen-coops, the watch see nothing as they gaze musingly at the rising, falling, moving waves.

21. But, towards the east, a white glimmer, like lightly-flying ashes spread out in thin sheets, seems to rise above the horizon. It floats, rains down, spreads wider, expands on every side, whirls round, sinks, and pours abroad its soft transparent mist. A pallid glow shines unfurled, the sea trembles and for a moment is cleft in twain, and into the pearly sky there slowly ascends the moon.

55. *The Rape of Europa.*

Blue was the mountain and the sea all rosy. From the pure horizon, in the perfumed air, the heavenly new-blown flower of dawn seemed to unfold above the charmed world. No less rosy than the dawn, on the shore of the wide, wide sea, the three maidens, with childlike laughter, their fair locks flowing free over their shoulders, played in the foam where gleamed their naked feet. With breasts half bare of their linen folds, with a light in their hearts and innocence in their eyes, with their robes caught up to their snowy knees, they passed, fearing neither gods nor men.

13. When lo, a great Bull appeared along the shore, grave and majestic with his broad flanks, a flaring star between his long horns, and purple gleams playing over his white hide. The ambrosial breath of his splendid nostrils wrapped him at times in a ruddy cloud, like to that golden mist with

which the pair born of Chronos' line veiled their love and their god-like sleep.

21. He came, and in the sand where gleams the iridescent foam, lay down, greeting with a gentle low the lovely group, mute and motionless with surprise, and caressed their feet with his steaming muzzle. Now, seeing him thus lying, one of them, whose bright eyes reflected the blue of the sky, youngest and fairest of three so fair, mounted on that Bull, majestic as a god. While she was laughing in her unthinking joy, he suddenly rose up on his iron haunches, and swiftly bearing off his charming prey, with a few fiery bounds darted into the sea.

33. The two others ran in tears along the sea-wrack beds, pale and with their arms outstretched towards the waves, imploring in turn the powers of heaven, and calling on their friend amid long-drawn-out sobs. She, as she saw the sweet soil of Hellas left swiftly behind, bewailed herself and trembled :—" Whither art thou bound, dear Bull? Why dost thou bear me away across the boundless billow, cruel one that didst seem so gentle and so fair? See, the sea is barren, it has no meadows or odorous grasses to feed thee. Alas, I hear my well-loved mates lamenting. . . . Turn back ! Am I not too young to die ? "

45. But he swam ever on towards the boundless horizon, thrusting back with his breast the weight of the great waters o'er which the tips of his horns shone bright, through the mist breathed out from his nostrils.

56. The Old Cemetery.

Into the old cemetery in which this warm rain has poured out o'er the flowering hawthorn, in a flood that the sun is drying up, perfumes and tears ; at sunset, into the old

cemetery where on every tomb the sheaves of sunbeams brighten the humble stones, come, let us enter ; beauty is here !

9. The sky, dappled by the transformation of its limpid azure, fringes with grey and rosy foam its great lake of unclouded blue. Since they live even now in these laughing cups that love the sun, the dead who sleep in this enchanting spot must be happy indeed ! Their souls are as a sweet perfume to us ; and mighty Nature, with all her wisdom, has made from their bodies, fallen into corruption, her harvest of lovely blooms.

21. Yes, it is from them that there comes to us this sweet, sad shade ; and they again are those pink posies, those amethystine sprays, those rich clusters of gold ! 'Tis they, those rose-bushes with their thousand white blooms, and those amaryllis flowers, this sky-blue cornflower and those delicate periwinkles, and they too are these lilies !

29. Even so sadly-brooding Nature, till the ruddy morn, lets the worthless ashes buried within us decay far from the sun—hate, grief, the nothingness of glory and of crime, the illusions of a day ; and, bathing in the sunlight all this noble dunghill, transforms it into love !

57. *Man and the Sea.*

Free man, ever shalt thou love the sea ! The sea is thy mirror ; thou dost image thy soul in the unending roll of its billow, and thy spirit is a gulf no less bitter. Thou dost love to plunge into the breast of thy likeness, grasping it with eyes and arms, and at times thy heart becomes heedless of its own murmurs at the sound of this tameless, savage plaint.

9. Alike, you are dark and full of mystery : oh Man,

none has sounded the depths of thy abysses ; oh Sea, none knows thy hidden riches, so jealous are you both to guard your secrets ! And yet, see now the numberless centuries that you have been striving together without pity or remorse, so greatly do you love slaughter and death, O eternal wrestlers, O brothers not to be reconciled !

58. *The Owls.*

'Neath the black yews which give them shelter, the owls sit ranged like stranger gods, their red eye darting its gleams. They are deep in meditation ; they will remain without stirring till the melancholy hour when darkness shall thrust away the slant-rayed sun and establish its own reign. Their attitude instructs the sage that in this world he must dread noise and movement ; man, drunk with a passing shade, ever pays the penalty for having desired to change his surroundings.

59. *The Broken Vase.*

The vase in which this vervain dies was cracked by the stroke of a fan ; the blow must have barely skimmed it, not a sound made it known. But the slight flaw, eating into the crystal day by day with its advance invisible and sure, has slowly circled it round. Its fresh water has drained away drop by drop, the sap of the flowers has given out ; no one suspects it yet : touch it not, it is broken.

13. Often too a beloved hand bruises the heart with but a touch ; then the heart breaks of itself and the blossom of of its love withers away. Still whole in the eyes of the world, it feels its wound, small but deep, ever growing and weeping in secret : it is broken, touch it not.

60. *The Song of the Air.*

To Air, the mighty god who rouses up the waves and lashes on the winters ; to Air, the lightsome god who makes fruitful the flowers and high-sounding the poet's line, greeting ! He is the great god whose flowing robe gives life unto the sky ; and he is the secret god who whispers to the maiden, " The beloved cometh." It is he who sends quivering along the pennons the pulsings of war, and it is he who flutters on the white necks of women the ribbons in their hair. Through him the waters pass in the laden clouds to freshen the harvests ; stirred up by him the scents of the bushes rise to the lips of dreamers.

17. With equal hand he rocks the grasses on the hills, the fleets upon the seas ; he is the nectar scattered from leaves on men's breasts, and the spirit of the universe. He moves ever-present in his vast domain, in every place at once, renewing life in all that hath breath, men and beasts and woods ; and in the chill chorus of the eternal forces, his song alone is joyous, he, changeful as hearts, free as wings, and beautiful as eyes !

61. *The Infinite.*

In the star-studded night into which I plunge a circling glance that my dream bears on to the infinite, I call up the oldest of suns, even he who was the father and sower of numberless stars, and who, as he peopled the dark ether from one point to the next, made of it a glowing ocean. Doubtless he is still burning bright ; and the orbs to which he gave birth now follow in his train, just as one sees from a hive the swarm born of it issuing, yet not fleeing, and

faithful in its desertion, leaving it only to circle round it still.

13. Farther, much farther than the visible spheres, and higher far, beyond the light golden dust with which the zodiac is strewn as with sand, in my mind's eye I contemplate this patriarchal sun : his greatness exceeds that of the planet I tread, even as it exceeds a grain of wheat. And what a grain of dust weighs in the balance with a grain of wheat, that do I weigh compared with this globe of ours, I the tiny parasite of its brute mass ; but in me it bears, does this worthless globe, that which the sun has not—the imponderable idea, and imponderable love likewise !

25. No longer do I spurn the sphere that gave me birth ; for, humble as it is, from it only have I drawn that which can make me judge the heavens. I place higher than the sun this heap of gloom and filth, if it is to this mixture I owe my heart and thoughts and eyes to wonder at them.

31. O sun of suns, how many centuries and leagues, exceeding memory and the azure realms, dig their mighty chasm between thy mass and me ! But this double space, monstrous as it may be, low as it may place me in the scale, yet measures the distance I have traversed. No longer dost thou awe me, for 'tis I am the miracle ! Thou art but the stake whence set forth the chariot which rolls towards the boundless goal ; and since this car, on which I have leapt, has been dashing onwards, the distance its glowing wheel has passed beyond thee, that I call my dignity !

43. Of a truth, my own impulse avails me but little, but 'tis the human race that bears me on in its advance at a gallop growing swifter day by day ! And soon to be cast down, outstripped, yea, trampled upon, in my fall I shall at least have still on my brow a baptism of olympic sweat ! And as, when he shakes off the dust of the arenas, the champion now grown old gives up the reins to his sons as soon as

he feels himself surpassed by them, and dies proud to leave men of his race to his town, and to his people an image in still marble in which his strength shall live on ; even so, grown old in my turn, my last years, which my weakening arm condemns to repose, will find me ready to depart ; and, having done my best for the common task, I shall bear away with me, though vanquished, the unconquerable assurance that in it the noblest part of me survives !

62. *The Lily-Gatherers.*

The mother and her child go forth into the copse-woods. The mother listens and keeps watch, and you can see her wan and scraggy breast through the slits in her coarse wool bodice ; the child, like a wild thing, with bare head and feet, follows her, and both prowl beneath the leafage in search of lily-of-the-valley blossoms. Lilies-of-the-valley . . . to sell ! Within their abode all is empty, bread-bin and garret too ; nought is left in the house save a baby weeping in his narrow wicker cradle. The town, where all can be sold, will pay them for these flowerets. To work, then ! O lilies, with your dainty little bells, pile yourselves up in their basket !

15. Ever further on, through the growing heat, they advance with stooping backs ; and now and then the mother scolds the child, who, too slow, lingers on the banks of the brooks. . . . The nests are full of joy and the flutter of wings, all are singing, nightingales, orioles, turtle-doves . . . but what to them is the song of the birds ?

22. In the evening, when shadows fill the streets, they will go and sell their posies to the passers-by, and the dreaming lads and the maidens, stirred by the breath of

spring, will suddenly feel in their unconscious hearts the echoing voice of new-born love thrilling in answer to the pure scent of the white lilies. The old men, at the sight of the flower of spring, will fancy they see in the blue distance the laughing phantoms of their whole youth passing hand in hand ; and the thinkers who love the beauties of eternity will recognise, in the heart of these frail bells, the imprint of fingers divine.

36. All will owe to the May lilies an hour of beauty, an hour of dreams beyond price. The mother and child will go home to their dwelling, gnawing a coarse, rough crust ; and, alone in their damp and crumbling room, they will count over once more with feverish hands their coppers marked with verdigris. Then both, with no hope but the torments and the disgusts of the morrow, with no memory but the cruel bites of the brambles that barred their way, both will fall asleep, longing for a truce, longing to forget in a dreamless sleep the agonies of a breadless day.

63. *The Kingfisher.*

Like a flash of azure lightning the beauteous kingfisher, winging over the hawthorns, darts straight towards his nest which sleeps in the cool of a hollow root. His iridescent wing has since dawn been dipped in the clear waters of the spring and the rippling pond ; he has explored all in his search of prey.

9. Drunk with the pure air, his body bathed in a delicate scent of new-mown hay, he reaches home, and his piercing note stirs to life the sleeping brood. His little ones, all fluffy, who hasten to the threshold at his echoing call, know as yet nothing of the outer world, wondrous and so great.

17. But, as they see their father and his flashing flight, their vague instincts are awakened, they have a presentiment of the meadows, the fish-haunted ponds that a sunbeam fills with light, and the swift flight o'er the surface of the green brooks girt with reeds and mares'-tails. . . . Their little wings quiver, and from their open beaks comes forth a chorus of thin voices.

64. *The Jam-Making.*

At Midsummer the currants are ripe. In the garden, clad in its gayest coat, near the tall lilies you can see their amber or ruby-coloured clusters hanging beneath the branches. Now is the hour. Already, in the shady kitchen, the white sugar-loaves, with their blue paper cornets, adorn the dresser on which the red preserving-pan sends back the gleams of the chafing-dish all aglow.

9. The fruit is brought in in heaping basketfuls, and its subtle scent perfumes the landing. Scissors get to work and the shining clusters fall apart like the beads that slip off a necklace. Childish fingers, separate the pips from the half-opened pulp without bruising the berry ! The serious housewife watches carefully over this delicate work of the bee or the ant.

17. You are her masterpiece, exquisite preserves ! As soon as summer decks with blooms the bindweeds on the porch, after the long tasks of washing and sewing, you are her pleasure, her indulgence, and her pride. Let the world be filled with fever, let its riot growl or be stilled afar, the peaceful house always sees at midsummer the earthenware dishes filled with ripe fruit ready for the cooking.

25. The clear syrup trembles and boils ; the air is scented with a smell of raspberry. . . . Children, with wooden spoons

in your hands, gently lift away the sweet-tasting scum which froths and bubbles at the edges of the brass preserving-pans!

Behold the work ended. The serious housewife proudly gazes on the glass pots in which the currants shine, as fresh and light as when they hung on their native bush. Now the clusters can defy the winter. . . . Like them, the housewife escapes time's menaces ; a heart at rest can be read in her calm eyes, and her brow remains smooth and clear as at twenty.

65. *Villula.*

Yes, it is to old Gallus that the domain belongs which you see hanging from the Cisalpine slope : the whole house finds shelter under one pine, and the thatched roof covers barely a single floor. 'Tis enough for a guest to share it with him. He has his vine, an oven which will bake more loaves than one, and in his kitchen garden the lupins grow luxuriantly. 'Tis little? Gallus has not longed for more.

9. His wood yields a faggot or two every winter, and shade in the summer beneath its leafy green ; in the autumn one may catch there some passing thrush. 'Tis there that, contented with his narrow lot, Gallus is ending his life where of yore he was born. Go to, you know by now that Gallus is a sage.

66. *Sunset.*

The blazing gorse, the glory of the granite, gilds the rough hill-top lit up by the sunset ; far off, still glittering with its foamy bar, the endless sea begins where the earth comes to its end. At my feet are night and silence. The nest is still, man has gone home 'neath the smoking thatch ;

in solitude, the evening Angelus, swaying through the mist, is blended with the mighty voice of Ocean.

9. Then, as from the depths of an abyss, from the copses, the heaths, the coombs, rise the far-off voices of belated herdsmen bringing in the cattle. The whole horizon is plunged in shadow ; and the dying sun, against a dark and gorgeous sky, closes the golden ribs of its ruddy fan.

67. *The Benediction.*

Well, in 1808 we took Saragossa. I was a sergeant. It was a ghastly day. Once the town was taken we besieged the houses, which, quite shut up, with a treacherous look about them, rained down bullets from their windows. We kept saying to one another in whispers, " It's all through the priests " ; and when we saw one of them fleeing in the distance, although we had been fighting from the peep of dawn with eyes parched with dust and mouths acrid with the loveless kiss of the cartridge, we joyfully shot at all those long black cloaks and all those broad brimmed hats, suddenly feeling in more cheerful mood.

13. My battalion was following a narrow alley. I was marching in my place as sergeant, with the light infantry, keeping an eye on the roofs to left and right, and I saw sudden bursts of red in the sky, flashing like the blast from a smithy. Far off, in the dull and deadly tumult, we heard the shrieks of women who were being slaughtered. We had to step every moment over dead bodies. Our men stooped down to get into the hovels, then came out with their bayonets red, and marked crosses on the wall with the blood on their hands ; for in those narrow ways you had to be sure not to leave an enemy in the rear. We advanced without drums or warlike march, our officers were plunged

deep in thought. The anxious veterans closed their ranks, and felt within them the faint hearts of recruits.

30. Suddenly at the turning of an alley, we heard a shout in French of " Help ! " With a few quick steps we reached our friends in peril, and landed in the midst of a fine bold company of grenadiers, driven back with ignominy from the forecourt of a convent defended only by twenty monks, black demons with shaven crowns, who had white woollen crosses on their robes and, barefooted, with bloody arms showing out of their sleeves, were cutting them down with blows from huge crucifixes.

40. It was a tragedy : with all the others I ordered the platoon to fire and cleared the square. In cold blood, deliberately cruel, for the troop was tired out and we all felt within us the souls of butchers, we killed that horrible group of heroes. And once the vile deed was done, when the thick smoke had lifted, we saw, from under the bodies that lay all entangled, long streams of blood flowing down the steps.—And behind, the church lay open, huge and dark.

50. Tapers starred all the gloom with points of gold, incense spread around its languorous scent ; and right at the back, turning towards the altar in the choir as though he had not heard the fight, a white-haired priest, very tall, was placidly concluding his service. That evil memory has remained so ever-present with me that as I am telling you I think I almost see it all again : the old convent with its Moorish front, the tall brown bodies of the monks, the sun making the red blood steam on the flagstones, and in the black frame of the low door, that priest and that altar glittering like a shrine, and the rest of us glued to the spot like boobies.

64. True enough, in those days I was a regular bag of oaths, a miscreant ; and more than one can still remember that once, at the sack of a chapel, I was seen to light a pipe

from the tapers on the altar, to show what an agreeable and witty fellow I was. I was already an old soldier (lit. an old wearer of the sabretasche), and the tilt my lip gave to my moustache foretold an oath and foretold it aright. But that old man was so white that he terrified me.

73. "Fire!" said an officer. No one stirred. The priest heard, for sure, but he gave no sign of it, and turned to face us with the great and holy sacrament, for his Mass had reached the point where the priest turns round and blesses the faithful. His uplifted arms had the sweep of wings. And each man fell back, as he traced the cross in the air with the monstrance, and we could see that he was trembling no more than before a congregation of women. And when his fine voice, intoning the notes as priests do with each *Oremus*, said "*Benedicat vos omnipotens Deus*," "Fire!" repeated the furious voice, "or I shall get angry."

86. Then one among us, a soldier, but a coward, lowered his rifle and fired. The old man turned very pale; but, without dropping his eyes, that shone dark and wild with courage, resumed, "*Pater et Filius*." What fit of rage or what mist of blood maddening some brain sent a renewed shot from out of our ranks? I know not; yet the deed was done. The monk, with one hand holding himself up against the top of the altar, and trying to bless us again with the other, lifted up the heavy golden monstrance. For the third time he traced in space the sign of pardon, and with a voice very low, yet quite audible since all other sounds were silent, he said with closed eyes, "*Et Spiritus sanctus*." Then he fell dead, having ended his prayer.

102. The monstrance rebounded three times on the stones. And as we remained motionless, even the old troopers, gloomy, with living horror in our hearts and our rifles grounded, before that shameful murder and that martyr's death, "*Amen!*" said a drummer with a roar of laughter.

68. *The Beggar's Eye.*

The old fellow with his ruffian's jaw gave me a look, but said no word, neither, as he roughly thrust out his hand, that humble appeal that softens the heart, nor yet a whispered word of thanks as he took my alms. But his wolfish eyes, his grey eyes, they indeed spoke to me, and I understood.

9. They said, "Do you think for your penny you have me at your feet and under them?" They said, "If the truth were known, it is you who are doing a kindness to yourself." They said, "When you throw me the penny, you are the only one to be satisfied with it." They said, "When you give so, you are the one that ought to thank yourself." They said, "A copper to the old greybeard, and how proud we are of being so kind." They said, "What a treat for you, to humiliate in me a man as good as yourself!" They said, "Your penny I have taken, I should have the right to spit on it." They said, "Very good! I take the gift, but hope not for my forgiveness."

25. Thus, without one word, the silent man spoke to me with his eyes. And I said not a word either, to the old man with his ruffian's jaw. I put some other coppers in his hand and quickly passed on my way, sneaking off in shame, thinking in silence that he was not wrong, was he now?

69. *The Butterflies.*

Butterflies, oh butterflies, stay hovering o'er the furrows. At the most flit o'er the heath; that is enough for your revels. What would you do down yonder, tiny specks on the great sea?

"Leave us, kill-joy! We must surely see other sports

than those to which we are wont. When one is cloyed with honey, know you not that gall is sweet through its very bitterness? "

13. But down yonder you will have no flowers to feed on, those are only found on land. Poor hapless little things, you will die of hunger on the lonely naked sea.

" Oh the prosy reasoner, who extinguishes our joy with his gloomy opinings ! Don't you see those watery meadows yonder are pied with lilies and pinks and roses? "

25. Butterflies, you are mad. Those flowers yonder, don't you understand me? Those are the salt sea waves where the glittering sunbeams reflected make the spring-time bloom in a garden of illusion.

" What matters that, if we yet believe in the flowers whose deceptive beauty is gilded by these sunbeams? Even if we never grasp it, is there not yet pleasure of a sort in risking the adventure? "

70. *Consent.*

Ahod was a wealthy shepherd in the plain. His wife one summer day set down her brimming pitcher, lay down beneath a tree in the land of Bethel, and, falling asleep, she dreamed a dream, which was even thus.

4. First it seemed to her that she woke out of a dream and that Ahod said to her : " Wife, come now and arise. Last year to the merchants of Sichor I sold an hundred ewes, and a third of the price is still owing to me. But the distance is great and my old age is weary. Whom could I send to Sichor in my place? A trusty and diligent messenger is hard to find. Go then, and demand of them thirty shekels of silver."

13. She protested not for desert, fears, or robbers : " Master, thou speakest to thy handmaid." And when, pointing towards the right hand, he had said, "'Tis yonder !" she took a cloak of wool and departed. The paths were rough, and so sharp with stones that she had blood on her feet and tears in her eyelids ; yet she advanced all the day, and at night she was advancing still, seeing and hearing naught, when suddenly from the shadows, with a ferocious yell, one leapt, put a hand over her mouth, with a frenzied wrench robbed her of her cloak, and fled, leaving a knife in her breast !

27. At this blow the shock of mortal terror awoke her. Her spouse stood before her. " To the merchants of Sichor," said he, " I sold an hundred ewes, and the third of the price is still owing to me. But the distance is great and my old age is weary. Whom could I send to Sichor in my place ? Rare is a trusty and diligent messenger. Go thou, and demand of them thirty shekels of silver."

34. The wife replied : " The master has spoken, I am ready." She called her sons, put her hands on the head of the high-spirited elder, kissed the little one on the brow, and taking up her cloak of wool departed.

71. The Servant's Prayer.

I have set the house in order and closed the hall, I keep watch over the goods of my sleeping master ; the great house-dog, stretched out on the flags, has not, like me, his eyes but half-closed.

5. I have silenced the fountain and lit the lamp, I have locked the china and folded up the clothes ; and in the peaceful darkness where the staircase ends, my tears fall in silence on my coarse brown bread.

Lord, I shall have no rest till underneath the tombstone : for the first time the summons will be sweet to me when I shall hear it in the depths of my bier, when I shall say “ *Master !* ” and it will be Thou !

72. *The Faded Stars.*

At the hour when on the sea the distant sails are blotted out by the silent eve, in which is slowly unfolded on its march across the skies the mighty army of the stars, dost thou never think that this bright firmament has its disasters, even as the sea ? That at every moment, craft o'erwhelmed by the shadows, stars are being wrecked and die ?

9. See'st thou towards the zenith that star floating in the billows of the boundless ether ? The astronomer has told me that her silvery sphere is now no more than a gloomy coffin. Of yore, in her haughty blooming-time, followed by a troop of worlds, she brought forth, majestic in her fruitfulness, Love and Thought and Life. One by one, all her voices have ceased beneath the heavens. The space round her is deadly pale ; she wanders for ever in the void in the mortal sameness of an eternal silence.

21. Yet she is so far away that since the thousands of years that she has been pacing her chill solitude, the last beam flashed from her sides has not yet touched the earth. Naught then is changed for us : every morn dawn's brightness bears her away, and every eve gives her once more her fitful gleam. . . . No man knows that she is dead. The anxious helmsman watches her shining afar ; and down there, as they wander o'er the strand, the lovers as they embrace call on her to bear witness to the immortality of their dream !

73. *Summer Rain.*

Fall, gentle rain ! O'er the parched garden where crackled summer's heat, o'er the blazing clashing garden, bursting with life and protesting as a young heart sick of life, fall, gentle rain !

6. Melody all but soundless, ever fainting away and ever born anew, clear and liquid song, shed thy sound of waters with its sweetness yet unheard ; mighty dew, refreshment to the open flowers, stream down from the dull heavens in tears of light, make thy dazzled raindrops to shine as rainbows in the colourless air ; watery web that the subtle wind makes waver to and fro, silvery tissue that the fleeting breeze folds far away, ever cross and weave thy diamond-decked threads. . . . Fall, gentle rain !

74. *Cyrano's Nose.*

DE GUICHE (*who has come forward with the marquises*). But hang it all, the fellow's a bore !

VICOMTE DE VALVERT (*shrugging his shoulders*). He's a braggart !

DE GUICHE. Isn't anyone going to answer him, then ?

VICOMTE. Isn't anyone . . . ? Wait a bit, I'll let him have one of those hits of mine . . .

(*Goes up to Cyrano, who gazes upon him, and planting himself before him in a dandified attitude*).

You . . . your nose . . . um . . . your nose . . . is very large.

CYRANO (*solemnly*). Very.

VICOMTE (*laughing*). Ha ! ha !

CYRANO (*imperturbably*). Is that all ?

VICOMTE. But . . .

CYRANO. 6. Oh no ! that's rather brief, young man ! You might say . . . O Lord ! . . . heaps of things, anyway. . . . With variations in the tone . . . for instance, now : Agressive : " I, Sir, if I had a nose like that I should feel obliged to amputate it on the spot ! " Amicable : " I say, it must get into your cup ! Get yourself one made with a lid to drink out of ! " Descriptive : " 'Tis a rock ! 'Tis a peak ! a cape ! What say I, 'tis a cape ? . . . it's a regular peninsula ! " Curious : " What is the purpose of that oblong capsule ? is it for an ink-pot or a box for scissors, sir ? "

17. Graceful : " Do you love the birdies so much that with a father's heart you bethought yourself to provide that perch for their little claws ? " Truculent : " Ho, sir, when you take a pipe, does the smoke come out of your nose without making the neighbours cry 'chimney on fire !' ? " Considerate : " Be careful not to fall forward on the ground, with your head dragged down by that weight ! " Tender : " Have a little parasol made for it, for fear its colour fade in the sun ! " Pedantic : " Sir, that animal alone whom Aristotle calleth Hippocampelephantocamelos must have had below his brows so much flesh on so much bone ! "

30. Breezy : " What ho, my friend, is that hook the latest fashion ? It's really jolly useful to hang one's hat on ! " Bombastic : " No wind, oh lordly nose, can give the whole of thee a cold, saving only the mistral ! " Dramatic : " When it bleeds, it's a regular Red Sea ! " Admiring : " What a shop-sign for a hair dresser ! " Lyrical : " Is this a conch, and art thou a triton ? " Ingenuous : " When's the monument open to visitors, sir ? " Respectful : " Sir, accept my salutations. That is something like having a gable-end of one's own ! " Rustic : " Hoi, lookee there ! Be 'er a nose ? Nay, 'er be some giant turmut or

mebbe some dwarf melon ! ” Military : “ Against cavalry, take aim ! ” Matter-of-fact : “ Will you raffle it ? Assuredly, Sir, it will be the first prize ! ” And finally, with a sobbing parody of Pyramus : “ Behold it then, that nose that has ruined the harmony of his master’s features ! The traitor blushes for it ! ”

48.—That, more or less, my dear fellow, is what you might have said to me if you’d had a trifling amount of letters and wit : but of wit, O most lamentable of beings, you never had an atom ; and of letters you have but the three that form the word : ASS ! Even if you had had the requisite invention to be able to serve me up all those fantastic witticisms before these noble galleries, you wouldn’t have uttered the quarter of the half of the beginning of one of them, for I serve them up to myself, with a certain animation, but I don’t allow anybody else to do it for me.

DE GUICHE (*trying to lead off the petrified Vicomte*).
Give it up, my lord.

75. *The Towers on the Strand.*

Widowed and rising beside the sea, the towers of Lisweghe and of Furnes weep ’mid the winds of the hoary winters and of the songless autumns. They have queened it o’er the country-side how many days, how many ages, how many epochs vanished away with the mists of their beaches?

Of old, men lit up a flare at their crests in the dark nights, and the mariner fixed his eye on that torch outstretched in the shadows. When war lashed the Scheldt with its warrior tumult, the towers up yonder seemed to spit up rage in flames from the earth. When men killed in farm and hovel

old men and children pell-mell, the towers cast their red flashes in supplication towards the infinite.

13. Since then war, 'mid the rolling sound of its thunders, clenches its blood-stained fist 'neath other skies ; and other blocks and other light-houses, armed with great eyes of gold and eerie crystal, cast beams of clearer light towards other waves.

28. But all the same you stand there still beside the seas, erect in darkness and in winter, shorn of crown and diadem, with no flames flickering o'er your heavy brows ; and there you remain, alone in the midnight wind, you, the towers, the mighty towers, the towers of Nieuport, of Lisweghe and of Furnes.

76. *My Child-Friend.*

The old garden, with its walls a-bloom with clematis, still seems big to me when I close my eyes, and you always seem quite tiny, with your face lit up by a mischievous and frank laugh. I still see you in the sunlit grass over which quivered nets of light in the morning, lightly leaping, as soon as you were awake, your eyes seeking everywhere the birds and flowers.

9. One was never sure of not seeing suddenly arising among the leaves, on the highest branch, your fair face and your white dress, like a climbing flower in the midst of the garden. I was barely your elder by just a few days ; I believe indeed that between the two of us we did not count twenty years. Your fantasies ruled my wandering spirit, like one insensate I followed your fickle whims. Scornful of dolls and of sand-pies, you loved only noisy and boyish games ; your only joy was to be free of restraint, and your movements were sulky if they were held prisoners.

21. Soon you grew pale over your lesson-books ; outside the thick, dark walls of the house your dreams pursued the whole multitude of insects hidden in the flowering grasses. Along each line the letters marched one by one in black files, like so many ants ; impudent sparrows would come and beckon to you. You looked from afar at your friends the trees. You listened to the dogs racing on the lawn, and at times you had tears in your eyes, and your little soul was all jealous of their frantic races and their joyful bounds.

33. You did not understand that in the hours of heat when the murmur of summer thrills under the brilliant sky, one can be alive and yet not be free, when the whole garden smiles and waits for you. Your heart grew impatient, without understanding that one must bend one's absent eyes on unknown words instead of dashing off under a straw hat to run in the sun and be fanned in the fresh air, instead of rolling in the grass and moss, of crushing in one's hands the roses in the clumps of bushes ! . . . And only in the evening were you serious and gentle, with slow movements and pensive glance. Your steps came nearer to the friendly house as soon as you felt the shadows on their way ; suddenly timid in the paling light, you let drop from your hand the flowers you were holding.

77. *The Sempstress.*

A little daylight above the rain. . . . The sun, yellow and blue, pours down its beams, beaded with the raindrops, on the houses of the suburb. Amid the exacting workroom she sews sad and stooping, but she feels sweetly above all the rainbow that is to be. When it shines boundless over the houses, dazzled by the gentle gleams of the rain, she has sung half-audibly.

13. She has sung the immensity of space, the vague and flower-strewn future. . . . Over her hands her eyes are smiling. She believes in her ballad, in beauty and in harmony, she feels infinity in herself, feels her lips bathed in light. And later on, grey and faithful, humming her old-world airs, she goes off to her own folk, with the evening around her.

78. *The Figurehead.*

The figurehead, stretched out on the stem, strains towards the four quarters of the infinite with forward-gazing face ; and magnificent, filled with the pride of the winds, the whole boat follows her like a slave. Her eyes have the line of the bitter-sweet distance, a thousand whiffs of salt air have swelled her nostrils, and her half-open mouth has drunk of all the seas.

8. At the moment of her first onslaught on the rounded billow, when, freshly built, she left the first of her ports, she set all sail to speed along, and her youthful sailors cried : " Northwards." That day wedded her, a virgin, with the Unknown. Thenceforth, chance lies in ambush for her on every shore ; for, on the narrow prow to which her fate holds her fast, who knows what oceans shall bathe her bare brows ?

16. Forgetful of tempests, she will sail on the silver of midnights and on noonday's gold, and her eyes will weep for the rounded havens when the waves shall attack her like wild beasts. She will know all aspects and every clime, heat and cold, the equator and the poles ; on her frail shoulders she will bear home the world, and every air of heaven at the tips of her masts.

79. The Past as it Spins.

The old dame spins and her wheel tells of ancient, bygone things ; the old dame's eyelids are shut, and she feels she is rocking an old toy. The hemp is pale, the old dame is white ; old soul, she spins but slowly, and to hear it better she leans forward over the babbling, lying wheel.

9. Her old hand turns the wheel, the other spins the yellow hemp : the old dame is dancing, turning in a ring, she thinks herself again a child at play. . . . The hemp she spins is light and fair ; she sees it so and sees herself as fair ; the old dame turns and turns around, the old dame dances in a ring.

17. The wheel spins gently round, and the hemp spins softly too ; she lists to a lover of old, softly murmuring that he loves her. . . . The wheel turns its last turn ; the hands stop in desolation ; for the remembrances of love had all been spun away with the hemp.

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